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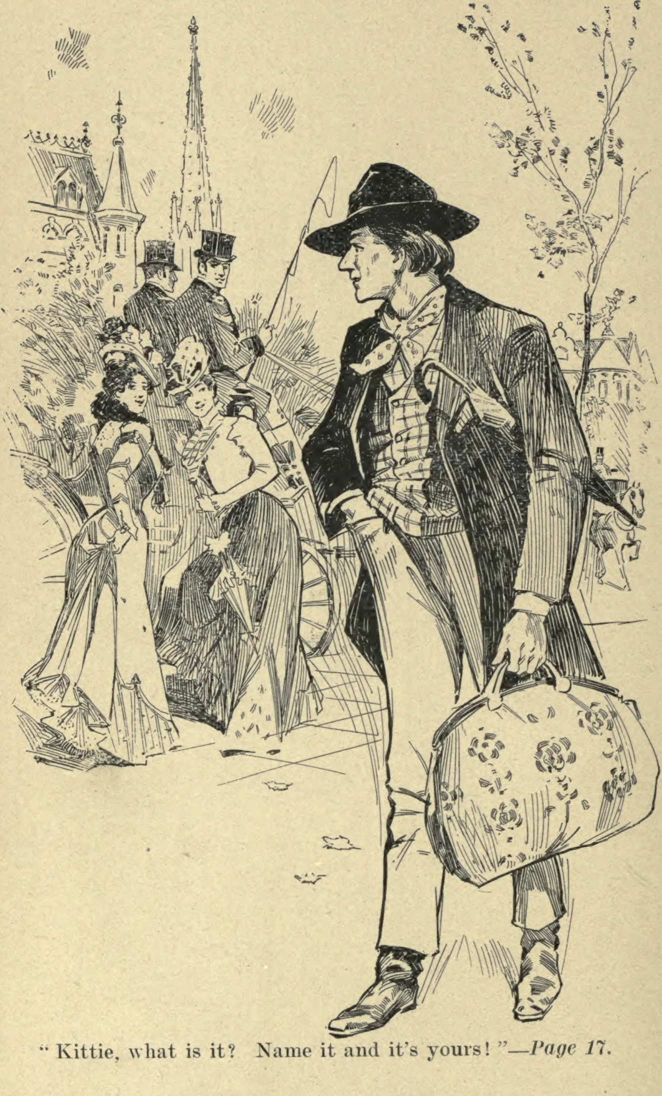

" Kittie, what is it? Name it and it's yours! "—*Page 17.*

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My Friend Bill

Many Stories Told in the Telling of One

University of Toronto Library

BY

lbert
Anson A. Gard

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Published by
The Emerson Press
149 Broadway
New York City

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ROBERT DRUMMOND, PRINTER, NEW YORK.

INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of "My Friend Bill" has made no attempt at a literary production, and he trusts that his readers will not view his first effort from any such standpoint. He believes that a story may contain interest even though the strict rules of literature are not followed. To write by rule is to lay down a plan and make everything fit to that plan. "My Friend Bill" is a life-story, and no rule can be laid down to fit a life. Each day brings forth a change, and the rules of yesterday may be broken by the happenings of to-day. "My Friend Bill" is a human story, in which the heart rather than the intellect guided the pen. That which pleases the intellect is a passing pleasure—that which touches the heart is a lasting impression.

The author has a kindly feeling for all those who see only the seamy side of life, and no patience with those whose selfishness would crush the hopes and ambitions of the "under man."

In the asides of his story he has tried to show up the shams and fallacies of the day in their true light, and has aimed to prove that true happiness is only found in doing justice to our fellows. The piling up of riches for the sake of riches, and the gaining of honors that vanity may be appeased, never bring happiness, while generous treatment is ever followed by contentment.

His casual characters are known only by their calling or occupation—a name means nothing, and is unnecessary. The reader of a story is like one in a promiscuous company—he cares not to have each individual introduced to him.

While many an author, who aims to follow literary rules to the letter, will devote pages to dry argument that nobody cares to read, the author of this volume has aimed to give, instead, some character-sketch or incident of human interest. In this he may, at times, have failed, or may even have failed in his main story, but he trusts that when you have reached the end, you will lay aside the book with a pleasant:

"HE IS MY FRIEND, TOO!"

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MY FRIEND BILL.

CHAPTER I.

We felt that the turn in the road at the bottom of the hill had shut out forever the Bill we had known from childhood!

Always when Bill came home on his summer vacations he seemed so different from the green country boy who had left Highmont for the great city of New York.

He was changed in so many ways that I cannot describe them. He did not exactly put on "airs," but the "airs" were on him just the same. He did, however, emphasize the fact that he lived on Fifth avenue. Now, to us boys, who had never seen New York, and, for that matter, any other place than our own little village of two hundred people, situated far back in the mountains of Pennsylvania, Fifth avenue was a greater place than a city itself, where only the millionaires had their palaces. He did not just say that he was better than we home boys, but you could tell by his every movement that he thought so; and somehow his living on Fifth avenue, or, as Bill called it, "The Ahvnu," we accorded him a position on a little higher plane, and he saw it and used it against us.

Then, his dress was different. His neckties were nattier. His hat had a narrow brim, with a colored band;

his shoes were pointed, and on occasion he wore gloves and carried a cane. Although he had always prided himself on his good eyesight, his later homecomings were marked with gold spectacles held on with a chain. In short, his whole make-up was the opposite of the roughly dressed Bill who had started away to seek his fortune in the far-off city.

I shall never forget the morning Bill left Highmont. It was an event we had talked of and looked forward to for months. We thought of his departure as though he were going out into an entirely new world. We knew of New York only as we had read of it. We could not compare it, as we had never seen anything with which to compare it. Somebody had told us that it was a great scope of flat country with houses built all over it and rivers all around it. This conveyed no notion to our minds, for we had never even seen a flat country or a stream larger than the "crick" that ran at the edge of the village, with here and there a place deep enough for a "swimming hole." Our impressions of the outside world cannot be conveyed by tongue or pen to any one save to him who has seen only one place, and that a rough, mountainous country, shut away from the world as by a great wall.

Bill had often said he knew he would miss our "singing school," "spelling matches," "corn huskings" and kindred gatherings for the young people from far and near. We knew, however, what he would miss more than all these—his Sunday nights with Anita. Bill never missed church Sunday night. He was one of the few boys at Highmont who was brave enough to start at the church door with his girl and run the gauntlet, which gauntlet always had much to say to the boy who passed down between.

But I started to tell of the morning Bill left Highmont.

We had all gathered down at Uncle Dave Carter's tavern, where the stage coach stopped, to see him off. He was so late we were sure he would be left behind, but bye-and-bye we saw him and Anita coming down the one street of the village holding hands. They walked slowly, as though loath to part. Anita seemed to have a premonition that it was the last time she would ever see him as her lover. We watched the stage coach as far as we could see it, and when it reached the turn, away at the bottom of the hill, at the bridge, we all went our several ways. No one spoke a word. We felt that the turn in the road had shut out forever the Bill we had known from childhood. And we were right. We never again saw him as we had known him. He may have been improved, but the childhood affection never returned. Anita's premonition became a reality, as, when he came home on his first vacation, he treated her with scant courtesy in return for her year's faithfulness to his memory. He told his mother that Anita was too quiet, or, as he said, to the complete shocking of the dear lady: "She's too derned bashful for me, see?" His mother's eyesight being most excellent for one of her age, she said she saw, but was pained to hear him swear so violently about it. "Besides, my dear son, why should you so soon forget Anita? She is sweet and modest, and of the best family in the village. I had looked forward to your home-coming almost as much for her sake as for my own. Often in the twilight she and I have sat and talked of you and wondered if you would be much changed. Little she thought to find in you coldness where she expected love—the same love you had promised when you said good-by a year ago. My son, you will some time regret this step!"

"Now, mother," said Bill, rather irritated at her long speech, "you know I expect to make my home in New

York. Anita may be good enough for Highmont, but I want a wife that I will be proud of. How do you think I should feel to have her come down to the office? The boys would never end with their guying me and my 'mountain lassie.'"

"I do not know what you mean by 'guying,' but I do know that the man who is fortunate enough to take Anita as a wife will never be ashamed to present her to his friends."

"Mother, you are prejudiced. You have never seen a real city lady, and think that because you love Anita, and because she is the best in this little mountain village, that she would be a lady in the city." Bill was almost rude in his manner toward his dear mother, but she, in her gentle way, softly replied: "I may not have seen what you call a 'city lady,' but I do know that a true and loving heart is to be preferred in a wife rather than the polished manners which so often clothe a heartless woman. You should marry a wife for the home rather than for the drawing-room. A woman may easily change her habit of dress, may acquire fine manners, but the heart will seldom change. Choose first a gentle nature, which indicates a kind heart; then consider the face. Anita has both the heart and attractive face. Change in her manner of dress will easily follow, for the woman has never yet been found who will refuse pretty things, if her husband's means admit of them and his wishes call for them."

"Mother," concluded Bill, "you cannot appreciate my feelings on this subject. I do not wish to go contrary to what you would have me do, but I cannot see in Anita that which I would choose in a wife."

As Bill talked about the city ladies and their "polished manners" I couldn't help thinking of Sam Wiggins' fine city wife. Sam had been a great beau among all the girls over the country. He knew them for miles in all directions around Highmont. They called him "Sweet Sam," as he always brought them candy. He went to the city and brought home with him a very elegant-looking wife. We always wondered how Sam won her. This fine lady, however, had her "temper," and would say things right out in company. Once during a visit to Highmont Sam wanted his wife to go with him to see some of his old girls. "What do I want to see *them* for?" she asked, in a key that would have opened all the upstairs rooms.

"Why," said Sam, meeklike, "to 'crow' over them!"

"You flatter yourself, Mr. Wiggins. What have I to crow over?" Then everybody laughed but Sam.

With all of Bill's indifference he would often think of the two years he and Anita had spent so happily together, for he loved her then, before he had gotten all those Fifth avenue notions in his head.

CHAPTER II.

When Bill came home again I could see that he missed Anita. He told his mother as much. He said he had found the city ladies more show than real.

Shortly after Bill's first visit home Anita's father moved away with his family. The Leightons had come to Highmont when Anita, their only child, was a wee bit of a girl of three years, so that she had known no other home. She had grown to love our village and its people, and when going away she said: "I know I will never find another place so dear to me as Highmont." One always feels that way when one has known but one place. The dweller in the city pities the poor mountaineer, while the poor mountaineer, in his turn, wonders how "them people do stand it, anyway, to allers be shut up in ther hot, dusty city!"

The Leightons had never seemed like our people. There was that about them which indicated a marked degree of culture. Mr. Leighton had been an officer in the British Army, and rumor said he belonged to a fine old English family, but no one could ever get him to talk on the subject, and so we got to thinking, from his silence, that there was a mystery about his life. "Why should he come to America and settle in a far removed mountain village of scarce two hundred people, all of them so different in every way from what he had been accustomed to? Did he want to hide away?" These and many more questions we asked each other. If to hide from the world, he had indeed come to the right place, as the only communication we had with the outside world was the tri-weekly stage coach, which few ever used aside from the "drummers."

With all our wondering, however, he came and went, taking with him the mystery, and not until years after did we learn that his real name was Charles Leighton Allyn, son of Lord Leighton Allyn, of Westmoreland, in the North of England.

When Charles was but eighteen years old he entered the army and passed a number of years in India. For his devotion to duty and his many deeds of valor he was from time to time promoted, until he had reached the rank of captain. Once during the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 the detachment to which he belonged was hemmed in by several thousand of those fanatical Indian soldiers. The English were so securely entrenched in the mountains that for days they kept back the hordes of Sepoys, but on the evening of the sixth day their ammunition began to run low. The commanding general called a council of his officers and told them that unless help came soon they would be unable to withstand the attacks. All knew that this meant that there would be no one left to tell the story of the battle.

"Surrounded as we are on all sides," said the general, "it will be almost impossible for us to get a messenger through their lines, and yet it is our only hope. But who will go? There is one chance in a hundred that their lines can be penetrated and passed by a man who does not fear death."

"General," spoke up Colonel Ross, "I have in my regiment a young lieutenant from Westmoreland who is not only fearless, but he is one of the most tactful officers in our army. If there is the one chance, he will take it."

"Call him at once," said the general.

Charles Leighton Allyn was called, and when the object of the council was told him, he quietly said:

"General, I will go!"

"Do you know," he was asked, "that it means almost certain death to you?"

"I do; but it may mean death to all if some one does not attempt this risk, and I fear not to try. General, I am at your service." The general gave him minute instructions for his perilous mission. He was ready within the hour, and set out at once, as every moment was precious.

How he succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the Sepoys as he passed through their lines he scarcely knew himself, but that he did, and by morning of the next day had reached the outpost of a large body of English troops beyond the mountains is a matter of history.

The general in command of these troops had been sent to relieve the besieged army, but knew not the great peril it was in, nor did he know its exact location until Charles had hurriedly sketched a rough map of the battleground and intervening country.

The long journey had been almost too much for even the hardy constitution of Charles, but there was no time to rest. He was given a horse, and was soon at the head of the moving columns, leading on to the relief of his comrades.

By forced marches they had come in sight of the battleground on the following forenoon, and were none too soon, for the ammunition of the besieged army was all gone, and they were fighting hand to hand with the now desperate Sepoys.

The fate of the battle quickly turned as the reinforcements poured down from the mountain side, sweeping everything before them. What a loud cheer went up as the advancing army came into the camp of their besieged friends! Charles was the hero of the hour, and well he might have been!

The day following he was called out in the presence of the united armies and decorated, and, although but twenty-one years of age, was made a captain. It was a proud day for his family in England when news of his daring deed came to them. He returned to his home shortly after this, as the active service was over, the Sepoys having been quelled and a number of them shot from cannon as a civilizing (?) example to their fellow-mutineers.

Charles had another tie besides his family to call him home. On a neighboring estate dwelt a young maiden whom he had known and loved from his childhood. He and Lady Whiteside had during the years of his absence kept up a correspondence. Her welcome to the young captain was quite as warm as that of his own family. His father, a stern, cold-hearted man, had never approved of this attachment. He had other notions about his son's choice in the selection of a wife.

"Charles," said Lord Leighton one day, shortly after his son's return, "I do not approve of Lady Whiteside. I have selected for you a wife more suitable. There is Lady Tealbrooke, a most superior woman, and one I would have you marry."

"Yes, father; but she is much older than I, very ugly in face and disposition, and cold natured; besides, I do not love her."

"Love! What has that to do with it? Think of the lands she will bring to you!"

"Father, in reason I will abide your decision in all things, but to ask me to marry a woman whose only merit is the lands she will bring to me is asking more than I can grant you."

"What!" cried the father, in a towering rage, "do you tell me that my will is not to be obeyed?"

"I cannot nor will I marry a woman I can never love, though she owned the whole of England!"

"Enough! Say no more. From this day forth I am childless. Go; there is no longer a place for you at my board—you, who refuse to do my will."

His mother, as lovely in character as his father was cold and heartless, pleaded in vain for her brave, noble son. The father would listen to no reason. His will had been defied, and nothing could change his purpose. Charles and Lady Whiteside were married soon after, and he got transferred from India to garrison duty in England.

Four years after his marriage his mother died. During all these years she had pleaded for her son, but Lord Leighton was relentless. Not even her death softened his nature. Charles resigned from the army and came to America with his wife and daughter, Anita. They came almost direct to Highmont. Of their residence there I have spoken fully. When they went away it was to return to England. Old Lord Leighton Allyn having died, his son, now Lord Leighton, came into his inheritance. They were loved by every one in Highmont, and their going away was deeply felt by all.

When Bill came home again I could see that he missed Anita. He told his mother as much. He said he had found the city ladies "more show than real." His mother, good soul that she was, proved an exception by not referring him to what she had previously remarked on that subject.

CHAPTER III.

Come to the city, Rube. I'll show you the sights and have fun with you!

Bill had often invited me to come to New York to visit him. "Come to the city, Rube. I'll show you the sights and have fun with you." I had a great longing to go. For years, on each recurrence of Bill's visits home, he had told me so many wonderful things about New York, and spoke so familiarly of its great men, that I thought he was on most intimate terms with them. This, with the fact that he lived on Fifth avenue, had always kept me from accepting his invitation. But finally I could resist no longer. I surprised the family one day by telling them that I was going to New York to see Bill. They tried to dissuade me, but all to no purpose. It had taken me years to decide, and I was now determined to go. I did not care if Bill lived in the finest palace on the avenue, even though next door to a man of millions. It was all the same to me, now that I had made up my mind. I did hope, however, that he would not make me spend much of my time visiting among his rich friends; I was afraid I would not feel comfortable. I did not write to him that I was coming. I wanted to surprise him, and subsequent events proved that I was most successful.

I will not try to tell of the pleasures of the coming. "My first ride on the cars" has been told by too many to have left in the telling any newness to the story. Suffice it that I seemed drifting through space into a new world at lightning speed. The only thing to mar the new joy was the fear that the train would run off the track. It did not, however, and I reached the city almost before I had fairly started. The longest part of the way had seemed the stage.

Not until I was safely in the city did it occur to me that I didn't know just where to find Bill—I don't believe I gave the matter a thought. Such a little item as an address, to one who had never had any occasion to use an address, it is not surprising that I should have given no thought as to how I was to find my friend. I sort o' felt that I'd run across him in the street, and if not, I would just find where he lived from some of those big friends of his. I knew that they would be only too glad to either tell me, or, for that matter, go with me if I told them that I was a friend of Bill's from home. Bill had always spoken so familiarly of these great men of New York, that I was sure they would know all about him.

I wanted to do the proper thing, so I thought to take a carriage, as I knew Bill would be more pleased to see me if I came in good style. I did not have the least trouble in finding a carriage, as it did seem that every man in town who owned a team was down at the ferry that day and knew at once what I wanted before I had said a word; and the minute I spoke—well, I had played football—head man of the "wedge"—but football was easy. When I "came to," half an hour after the "rush," I found myself going uptown. I asked the driver where he was going with me. "Fait', Oi doan kno'; ye hov'n't tould me yit; but it's whariver ye wants." I asked him if he knew where Fifth avenue was. "Thrue far ye—divil a place in the city Oi doan kno'. And is it Fifth ahvnu ye wants? It's whurlin' to it, ye ahr."

That driver knew more about New York city than a guide-book, and he was so sociable and willing to impart information that I quite forgave him the terrible hustling I got at the ferry. I asked him, as a sort of introduction, how he got me, seeing there were so many after me.

"Ye may wull ask thot saim, and thonk me bruther, who is ahn the foorce, far savin' yer loife by puttin' ye into me kerridge."

"I thought," said I, "they were all on the 'force,' the way they hustled me."

"No; Oi mane me bruther is ahn the purless foorce, and is stashunned at the firry."

Just then we passed through a woods lot, with walks and flowers, and benches here and there, with all sorts of people sitting around, as though they had nothing to do but take life easy. It was all very beautiful. The driver said the place was called Washington Square. I wanted to stop a while and look at it, but he would have to hurry on, he said, as Fifth avenue was a long way off yet.

From this "square" we drove out into a wide road that was so very long that I couldn't see the other end of it.

Further on up this wide pike we came to another little "square." The driver said it was Madison Square. He pointed out a red brick house across the way, which he said was Mister Delmonico's place. I had often heard Bill speak about this house, but he always called it "Del's." I was almost sure it was the same place. No, it could not be; "Del's" was on Fifth avenue. He also pointed out another big house—a big stone house—just across to the west from the "square." "Thare's phare the up-Sthate pollytishuns hould Sunday school." I could not help thinking that there must be a great many politicians up the State to need so large a house. I also thought how different New York politicians were from those in Pennsylvania, where the smallest school-house in the country would hold all who wanted to attend Sunday school and not crowd each other at that.

Further along I saw a great pile of stone at one side of the road, and asked the driver if it was a stone quarry.

"Oh, no," said he, "thot is the riservoy phat thay ahr goin' to tare down and build a library in 2200 A. D., if by thot toime the coourts hov decided thot Mister Tilding knew how to dhraw a wull; and thot big bilding beyant is called the Grand Cintril." And so he ran on, telling me of more places than I had ever thought there were in the whole city of New York. He was so well acquainted; not a house but he could tell me who lived in it.

Of all the fine parks we had seen there were none of them that could compare with the one called "Cintril" Park. We drove along its full length. To see it made me almost ashamed that I had asked so often if we would never reach Fifth avenue. Several times I felt convinced that we had come into New York at the wrong end. That driver, however, talked so entertainingly about the various places we were passing, and told me so many things about the people who lived in the palaces on the way, that I scarcely noticed the hours as they passed—for that matter, the hours passed along faster than our old horse. I was fortunate that I had brought with me, from home, an abundance of ginger-bread in my big carpet satchel, else I had grown very hungry before we had reached Bill's ahvnu.

Finally, late in the afternoon, the driver said we were nearly there. Up this street, down that, back up another, and then: "Here ye aire at lasht. It was a lang, tajus thrip ye hod." Indeed it was long, much longer in time than my stage coach ride of the morning from Highmont.

"And now, Pat, what is the fare" I asked.

"Wull, Oi'll hov to kalklate. Cortlandt to Washington Sqare, twenty-four blox; Washington Sqare to Wan Hundrid and Thurty-ate strate, is wan hundrid and thurty-wan more; thot maix wan hundrid and fufty-six blox awl tould—at fure cints a blok—$6.40—no, $6.24—yis, thot's roight, six dalers and twinty-fure cints."

I told him that he was mistaken; that my name was not Astor. "I am no millionaire."

"Come aff, now; yeez name wull be Dinnis if ye dispute me bill, which is moast rasinable, afther me lang dhrive, nat to minshun the grate infurmashun Oi've guv ye cumin' alang."

I finally compromised with him on $5. Then I started out on Fifth avenue to hunt for Bill.

CHAPTER IV.

"Kittie, what is it? Name it, and it's yours."

Were you ever raised in the country and got dropped down into a great city all at once? Then you remember how the first thing you did was to look about for a familiar face. Out home you knew everybody for miles around, and got so used to knowing people that the feeling followed you. Oh, I know how it was with you; that is just how I felt that day on the "Ahvnu."

As I walked along I felt sure that I must meet some one I knew, but I did not, and yet, strange to say, while I didn't know a soul, a number of the people I met knew me even by name.

I knew that they had never been in our town, for whenever a stranger dropped in we all went down to the tavern and got real well acquainted before he left the village. It was no end of wonder, then, to me to hear these people, as they passed, remark to each other: "There's A. Ruben. I wonder when he got in?" Now, how could they know me, and I just arrived? I puzzled my brain until it was all of a whirl. I forgot to introduce myself to you before. My name is Adolphus Ruben Hickenlooper, of Highmont, Pennsylvania.

I had divided my first names up in various ways. Sometimes Adolph Ruben, Adolphus R., and Dolphus R., but when Bill came back from New York on one of his vacations he said that the proper thing was to use the initial of the first name and the full middle name. Since then I have always written it A. Ruben. And now, to think of these people, utter strangers to me, in a far-away city, knowing me! It was too much for my comprehension!

Some of them were real friendly and spoke up so sociable like that it made me feel that I was home again. "Hullo, Rube," said one; "when did you come?" I told him that I had just got in. "Glad to see you. How are the folks at home? Say, Rube, you want to keep off the Bowery." I thanked him. Now, how did he know that I wanted to keep off the Bowery? That was one of the very places I had heard Bill speak of so much that I had determined to see it as soon as possible, and here was this fellow telling me that I wanted to keep off. It just shows how little some people know what other people really want.

Not only the men, but the women as well, showed a friendliness. I had always thought of the New York ladies as cold and haughty. Not so, for I met two beautifully dressed girls as I came down the avenue. They had just come out of one of those palaces that lined the way, and were about to enter their carriage, which was waiting for them at the side of the road, as I passed along. They smiled real friendly, and began talking to each other. I could only hear a little of what they said. One remark, however, seemed very odd to me: "Kittie, what is it? Name it, and it's yours." There was really nothing to the remark, and yet they both laughed right out and smiled at me as they were driven away by two soldiers, in uniform, who sat on the top of the carriage.

I had been so taken up with the people I met that I had not noticed the houses, but when I did look at them they looked so familiar that I felt I had seen them in a dream.

When, however, I got down to the stone quarry, which the driver had called the "riservoy," I knew it was no dream, but I was greatly bewildered. How could this be Fifth avenue? How could all these other places be on Fifth avenue, when I was here only an hour or two before? I asked a man, who looked as though he wanted to talk to me: "Is there any other road in this town that looks just like this one?" He said there was but one Fifth avenue, and that it looked only like itself and never changed, except just before election, when they dug it up to give work to their "heelers." I wished for the driver. I was sure that he could explain it, for he did know a sight of things for one in his walk of life.

I had not been idle in my search for Bill. On every chance during my long walk I had asked people if they knew him. I met one oldish gentleman, coming leisurely along, who had such a good, kind face that I thought he might tell me the best way to find my friend. He said that without an address I would have a long search.

"It is so strange," I told him, "that I can't find anybody who knows Bill. Why, mister, from what Bill always said himself, or, rather, what I gathered from what he did say, I was under the impression that everybody on Fifth avenue knew him intimately."

"I am afraid, young man, that your friend Bill is like a great many other country boys who come to New York. They stay here a few months, and on their return home give their friends the impression that they were the only fellows coming down the 'Ahvnu' while in the city."

He asked me my name, where I was from, when I got to town and how long I intended to remain. When I told him my name he smiled and said: "It fits very well." I didn't know what he meant, but I smiled, too, just as though I understood. He wanted to know if I was in any particular hurry, and, if not, would I come in with him, as he lived "only a step or two up the block." I was almost afraid to go, as Bill had often told me about men called "bunkoers," who invite you in and "do you," as he said. When I looked at this man's genial face I knew he would never "do" anybody. I knew I was safe, and said I would go with him, wondering all the while why he should want me as a visitor. He took me into a palace. I wish I could describe it, but I don't know what words to use, as I had never seen anything like it before. We sat down, and he then told me why he had invited me in. He seemed almost sad as he said:

"Young man, you have told me that you live far away in the mountains of Pennsylvania, so far removed that you see nothing of the outside world. I would have you tell me some of the humorous stories that prevail in your country. This may seem to you a very strange request, but when I tell you that I am what they call an after-dinner speaker, you may appreciate my position. Here I am scarce in middle life, and yet, with invitations increasing, I have told and retold all the funny stories extant. I have searched in foreign lands for something new and found nothing. I have carried to the royalty of Europe my best stories. I have told these stories on one visit, knowing that they will be fully understood and their fine points appreciated by my next. But now I have nothing left to tell which I have not told and retold many times before. My reputation is at stake—yes, young man, my very reputation;" and then, almost desperate in his anxiety: "Tell me, tell me but one good story that is new, and I am your friend always."

Not for a moment would I have believed that this man was a humorist, so tragical was he in his search for humor. I could not deny him the simple request, and so I related a number of stories I had heard Uncle Dave Carter and Dave Stoner tell of winter nights as we all sat around the old stove at Carter's tavern. He was wild with delight as I told these simple village stories. He said they were nearly all new, and was kind enough to say that I told them well; even said I would make an after-dinner speaker—if I took enough years' time for it. He invited me to call at some other time and to let him know when I found Bill.

He had aroused my curiosity to know something about after-dinner speaking, so I asked him what they did at these dinners. He looked at me inquisitive like and said: "Oh, a good many things, young man, especially at some of them to which I don't get an invitation." He said that if I was going to be in the city for any length of time he would get me an invitation to one, and then I could see for myself. I was delighted, and couldn't help wondering what the people of Highmont would think if they knew I had a possible chance of getting an invitation to a swell New York dinner, as the guest of—whose guest would I be, anyhow? Who was this man? He hadn't thought to tell me his name, and I couldn't ask very well; but I knew he could not be far from the top. Had he not spoken of the royalty of Europe? I felt just then almost as well pleased as though I had found Bill. He was profuse in his thanks, and, as I was going, he gave me his card. When I looked at it I nearly fell down the steps, so great was my excitement. Here I had been visiting with the very man Bill had always spoken of as one of the best-known men in the world, and he had treated me as though I was one of his own kind, instead of looking upon me as the green country boy that I was.

I soon noticed that I was dressed different from the men I met. Nearly every one had "pants" that came clear to his very shoe heels, while mine only came half-way up my boots. They wore their coat sleeves, as I thought, far too long for comfort, while none of them had a nice, broad-brimmed hat like mine. Neither had any of them hair so long as mine. In short, I was what might have been termed real unique in my dress. It must have been quite a marked difference, as nearly everybody seemed to take a lively interest in my appearance, much as we were when a stranger came to our village dressed differently from us. We never, however, patterned after him, as our village tailor, who was also our barber and horse doctor, always used to say, when one of these strangely dressed fellows came around: "That man don't know the first thing about style." But we never tried to make him feel that we noticed, as we just thought he might dress as he pleased; and I guess he would have done so, anyhow, even had we spoken to him on the subject, as I have heard Bill say that city people were very set in their ways.

I call to mind one young fellow in particular who once came to Highmont, hunting. We called him the hunter, but he never got any game except what he bought from some of us boys who could shoot. He'd pay us two prices for it, too—one for the game itself and the other, not to tell on him, when he would be bragging about his good luck, of an evening, at Carter's tavern. You should have seen that hunter. He had three trunks of clothes, and changed them so often that had we not gotten used to his face we would have thought he was a whole company of hunters. He had a peculiar scar on his right cheek, which he said he had gotten in a duel over in Germany, where he had been at college. He was very proud of that scar. He said if a student didn't have a sword cut somewhere about his face or head that he wasn't thought to be anything. For my part, I'd rather be a large nothing than to have my face made more homely than it is by a cut of honor, as he called it. He told us how in Germany the custom of treating was not known. It was before he had learned of this that he one day offered to pay for a fellow-student's drink, which insult brought on the challenge and the cut. I couldn't help thinking how dry some people would get if that custom prevailed here.

We sometimes got real mad at him. While we were shooting the game for him he would be very agreeable, but the minute he got into one of those changes of clothes he was another man, and the other man wouldn't speak to us. He would look at us through a piece of glass that he had tied to a string, as though we were some rare bird or beast that he would like to shoot at. This didn't scare us a little bit, for we had seen him shoot. Then there was another thing that made us wild mad. The young girls in town acted as though he was the only real thing that had ever blown into the village. No matter where they were, this hunter was all they talked about. Toward the latter part of his three weeks' stay the girls couldn't see us boys, even when we were standing right by them. One strange thing about him was that nobody knew when he left town. He sent his trunks on the stage one day, but he stayed right on and hunted. Then all at once, when nobody suspected a thing, he was gone—swallowed up, as it were. He was the only stranger that ever left Highmont without our knowing it.

It was getting late. I had walked the full length of the avenue and I had found no clue to Bill. A man went with me into a drug store and looked all through a big book, which he called a directory, but he couldn't find any one by the name of William Van Alden, except one, a banker, and his residence was in Hackensack. I knew this couldn't be my Bill, for what else he might be, he was no banker. I gave up the search for the day, and went back up the road to a large hotel in front of Madison Square, where I stayed all night. Next morning, when I went to the desk to pay, I was amused when the fellow with a small looking-glass on his shirt front thought I wanted to buy the room I had used for the night. "No," I told him, "I don't need it; I have no use for it. Besides, how can I take it with me?" I was amused only for a short time, for, when he said, "That's the price for the night," it all flashed onto me then that that was why even the bankers move out to Hackensack.

A real nice young man, who had heard me talking with the fellow of the looking-glass front, told me that if I would put an advertisement in the newspapers that I wanted a room and board, that I would perhaps get some answers, and I could select from them a nice place. He said I had better put it in three or four papers, as, if only in one, the people who keep boarders might not see it. I asked him where I could find the papers, and if there were as many as three or four in the city. "Oh, yes," he said, "and, as I am going downtown, I will show you where some of them are." He pointed out six, and said if he only had the time that he would point out the rest, but, that being his busy day, I'd have to look them out myself. I forgot to say that the looking-glass man—to show me that there were no hard feelings—said that I might have the answers sent to his hotel.

I began at the first one—a German paper. The clerk was very sociable and nice. He told me how to write the advertisement: "Wanted—A nice, quiet place, quiet and homelike, to board." I put it in the six papers which the young man had pointed out. I didn't say it always the same way—tried to see how many different ways I could word it, but I never failed to get in "quiet and homelike." I didn't want a noisy place, whatever else I got. By the time I had visited the six papers I had acquired the ad. habit to such an extent that I spent the rest of the day hunting out the other newspapers in town. I must have found them all, by the appearance of my pocketbook at the end of the day, but, then, I was determined to find a "nice, quiet place" to board, while hunting for Bill. As the papers made me pay for every word I used, I saved a good many pennies by dropping my last name and signing simply "A. Ruben."

CHAPTER V.

"If a man knew on Tuesday what he finds out by Saturday, there are a good many things that would never happen."

If a man knew on Tuesday what he finds out by Saturday, there are a good many things that would never happen. My troubles didn't begin all at once. They just grew gradually, but a very swift "gradually" it was. I put in the "want" on Tuesday, and on Wednesday morning went up to the hotel in the hope that I might find some replies. "Did I find some?" I did; but you should have been there on Thursday. They came in—whole sacks full of them—like wheat at threshing time. The looking-glass man was wild. "Young man," said he, "this is your work, turning our hotel into a postoffice. Our porters can do nothing all day but handle your mail."

The newspaper reporters, always looking for something to print, swarmed around like bees at a sugar camp, and the very papers that had taken my money on Tuesday came out on Friday with great headlines, such as "A. Ruben starts an endless chain at the ——— Hotel." "A. Ruben's correspondence grows." "He wants a quiet boarding place," etc. Some of them had my picture and a sketch of my life, both of which were as correct as pictures and sketches usually are in the daily papers. But most of them confined themselves to reporting the great rush of business at the hotel. By Saturday the suburban towns began to be heard from, with: "I have just noticed your advertisement, and I am sure I have the very place you are looking for." Many of the writers, not satisfied with extolling their places, went on to give a complete history of their family, "merely to show you who we are—that we are not ordinary people." What, with letters still coming in from the city, and the country replies added to them, things were very exciting at this particular hotel. The clerk grew desperate and said if I would only change my address that he would give me back what he had charged for the room and pay me ten dollars besides. I had hardly accepted the offer when a real bright-looking young man came up and said that he had been hunting for me—said he would give me twenty-five dollars for my mail, and that I might change my address to his office. I could not think what use he could make of it, but I accepted his offer and made the change, glad to get out of the matter so easily and so much ahead in the transaction. I learned that he bought the mail for the addresses. He told me a week or so after that he had never before known that New York had so many "quiet, homelike places." It made him feel real homesick, he said, to read some of the letters. He was from a large town in Pennsylvania, he told me.

I selected a place on a side street, near Fifth avenue. It proved to be a typical New York Boarding House, with big capitals. There were a good many boarders beside myself. I shall never forget my first supper—or, as they called it, dinner. Everybody was so sociable, and all wanted to talk with me. I had never considered myself a humorist, yet they all laughed at whatever I said and made me feel right at home. Some of the young men seemed to me real born statesmen, the way they could talk on the great topics of the day. One, whom I afterward learned was a clerk in the thread department of a Sixth avenue store, said: "The way the President is running the affairs of this Nation is an outrage. If I had the matters in hand, they would be run in an altogether different manner." Then, turning to me, he wanted to know: "Ruben, what do you think of it? What is your opinion?"

"I have no opinion," said I. "If I could tell the President how to run the national affairs he might want me in his Cabinet, and I haven't the time; I am here hunting for my friend Bill." Then they all laughed, and the young statesman stopped talking. I was real sorry, because he was a good talker and I liked to hear him.

Another of the men—"The Heathen," they called him—like all heathens, he seemed to think that everybody but himself was in the wrong. There was nothing in the Bible worth believing—the whole thing was one great big mistake. He said that Moses—"if there ever was such a person as Moses—had made a great many mistakes"—as he said—"many were very grievous mistakes." Then, like the young statesman, he wanted to know of me if I didn't think so, too?

"Oh, yes," said I, "I guess he did; but he should be pardoned, as he never had the advantages of a New York boarding-house, where he might have learned just what to do to escape those grave errors of which he is accused." He looked very angry just then, but he did not say anything more about Moses.

They talked about many things I had never before heard of. A fine-looking young man at my left, who I learned next day from one of the other boarders was an actor in the theatre—or expected to be as soon as his agent found him a place—told us all about why a man by the name of Forrest was not a real good actor. I was much interested in his great display of theatrical knowledge, but feared for the young man, if this Mr. Forrest should ever get to hear what he had said about him. I said as much to the lady who sat at my side. "I wonder," said I, "what Mr. Forrest would say if he should hear the way his character is being torn up?" She laughed right out, and said that Mr. Forrest was dead. "Then," said I, "the young man is safe."

I never heard so many weighty matters decided so conclusively before as at that table. It made me feel, as I sat there listening, that my education had been sadly neglected. Very few subjects on which they discoursed so ably had I ever even heard mentioned before.

"Ruben," asked the man with the red whiskers, "what do you do in winter time out where you live?" I was very grateful to him, for I was beginning to feel out of place, surrounded by so many intellectual lights. Now I could talk a while on things which I knew more about than they did. I said we had "spelling matches, school exhibitions, corn huskings, apple cuttings, turkey shooting matches." "Come, now," said he, "Ruben tell us about those shooting matches. What are they like? How do you do it? Does the fellow who shoots the best always get the turkey?"

"Not always," I answered.

"Why not always?" Then I had to tell them about the time when the other fellow got the turkey.

CHAPTER VI.

"It is not always the best shot that wins the turkey."

"I was only eight years old when I ran off from home one day—one Christmas day, I remember it well. There was going to be a great shooting match down in 'the woods pasture.' It had been talked about so much that I felt I just couldn't miss it. I knew what the penalty would be if father should get to hear of my being there, but you all know the risk the boys will take to do something they know is forbidden them to do. Well, I went. During the early part of the match I hung around the edge of the crowd, afraid that I might be seen by some one who would carry the fact home to father, but soon the match became so exciting that a whole score of small boys of my size could walk unseen by both participants and onlookers, and I came boldly out and watched the game. There was Captain Scott Martin, captain of the old militia company, which did great service—in the village—up to the time they were about to be called out for active service, when they disbanded; Uncle Dave Carter, the Ritter boys, John Flick and a lot of others—all good 'shots.' One after another won his turkey. The interest ran high. Scott Martin was ahead, with four turkeys to the good. I was now becoming fairly wild with the excitement. What matter if I had been taught that it was very wicked to shoot for turkeys, when there, before my little eyes, was the very last turkey being put up—the last one—the finest old 'gobbler' of the lot? Men, I couldn't stand it. The temptation was too great for my young sporting blood. I had ten cents, and took a chance. Now for the trial of skill, men against the boy, and I the boy. Excited! do you ask? Never so much in my life, before or since. I couldn't be still. Like a young charger going into his first skirmish, I pranced about, awaiting my turn to shoot. Captain Martin let off.

" 'Good shot,' cried the marker. Next, Joe Ritter let fly, and missed the board amid cries of 'Get him a barn-door.' John Milt made a good shot, while John Flick cut just inside of Martin's try. But when Turm Neff, who had just arrived, came up to shoot, everybody as good as conceded to him the turkey, he being the best marksman in the county, with perhaps the exception of his old uncle, Abe Shockey, the deer hunter and trapper. Turm knew that there was very little space for a ball being placed between the last shot and the centre. He took his own time, and when he fired he was so near the 'tack' that the crowd cried out, 'Bawkman, the bird's yours,' and he went over and picked it up.

"You should have heard them all laugh when I piped out, at the top of my voice: 'Say, I hain't shot yit!'

" 'Rube, you just save your powder, and Turm will give you the "drumstick," won't you "Daddy"?' (Turman had no end of nicknames.)

" 'Yes, Rube, that's a nice little boy; you may shoot next year.' I would not have it that way, as I knew that I could, at least, beat Joe Ritter's shot, and when I insisted they let me shoot, I suppose to please me. I had been used to a gun ever since I was five years old—my earliest prayer, I remember, was for a gun and a drum. Everybody was now on tip-toe of excitement—the novelty of seeing a child take part in a turkey shooting match—

and that child the son of a deacon, who thought everything was wicked that had the smallest mite of sport in it—was great, even in a country where boys were taught to use firearms. Being 'only a little boy,' they let me 'rest' my gun on a big stone. I took, oh! such good aim, held my breath—and—pulled the trigger. Whether by accident or actual skill, I—struck—the very—centre, and won the finest turkey of the day. The cheer that went up at my supposed fine marksmanship was so loud that it woke up my conscience to the enormity of the crime I had just committed. Why had I gambled, and won a turkey at a shooting match? I, the good little Sunday school boy, shooting for a turkey! I remember to this day how I felt under the lashing of conscience at that hour. By the time conscience had me thoroughly worked up Cousin John McDonald came over to where I stood trembling with my prize.

" 'Rube,' said he, 'I want that turkey.'

" 'You shall not have it,' I cried. 'It's mine; I beat all the men and won it fairly.'

"Do you believe it, John wouldn't even argue the question with me. He just stood there and said: 'Rube, I want that turkey, and if you don't give it to me I'll tell your father.' Argument was not necessary after that; John knew it, and got the gobbler. That's the only time I remember of the other fellow getting the turkey."

After this they used every night to call for more country stories. They said they wanted to make an "after-dinner speaker" out of me, and knew no better way of giving me practice. I have thought many times since that they were only wanting to have "fun with me," as Bill would say. Be that as it may, they were very kind, and always listened when I told them of the country and its people. I told them my notion of the difference between the country boy and the city boy. I talked much as though "speaking a piece."

"The country boy is born and "raised" amid surroundings that seldom change. Winter follows summer, and summer in turn follows winter. The seed is sown and the harvest is gathered. The years come and go, one so like the other that he scarce notes their flight. He sees nothing new, he hears nothing new. The teacher at the village school—and usually there is a new one each year—begins in the fall and gets just so far by spring. Next year it is the same routine. If the boy has learned anything, it is no credit to the teacher, but in spite of the teacher, who, in many cases, has taken the position as a means of getting money for his own education—which he is so sadly in need of. The preacher (this refers to the old school, not the progressive new) he has to listen to, or be "licked," is usually one who can't possibly get a "call" any place else. While this preacher may not be brilliant, he is real good—that's all, just good—but, oh, how long he can preach, as though he were working by the hour and wanted to get in all the time he could. I used to call them "opiates." Father never heard me call them that but once—that once was enough for me. Ever after that I was careful to see that father and I were in different localities when I had aught to say on the subject of "opiates." That reminds me of how angry I got at Bill one day. He and I were at preaching, it was in about the third hour of the discourse, when he woke me up all of a sudden to look across at Aunt 'Sinda, who was sound asleep. It was very mean of Bill. There may be a library in the village, near by, but the book that passes the scrutiny of the committee, composed usually of the preacher, deacon and some members of the sewing circle, is not one to make a boy sit up o' nights to read.

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"I must not forget to mention the "hired hand." He is an "institution" in country life that must not be passed lightly over. The education which the country boy gets at this "institution" may not be good, but it is very lasting. The "hired hand" is never happier than when he can get a boy to believe his stories. My experience with him leads me to believe that Munchausen was a "hired hand." I was always a favorite boy with him—the "hired hand," not Munchausen. He told me many strange things that occurred in "the ould counthry." They always occurred away off, which gave them added wonderment for me. As an illustration of these stories, I think it was Dennis O'Donahue, or—well, I am sure his first name was Dennis —who told me about how, in his country, there was a law against using guns to hunt with, and how the poor people had to raise "cat burds" and hunt with them, instead of with guns. By this time my interest was at its height, and I wanted to know how they raised the cat birds. Said Dennis:

"Ye first make a nist ov sthraw, nixt ye git a duzzin aigs —hin's aigs—thin ye git a noise, gintle cat, and ahn the aigs sit the cat, and whin the aigs hatch out ye have a baste that has the dubble power of the cat and the burd—the burd part duz the flyin' and the cat part duz the catchin' of the gaim, and there ye are. It bates the gun, and no law agin it."

It took my poor little hands a month to get well of the scratches, all on account of that story. I remember how I spent that whole afternoon trying to induce "Old Tom" to sit, but "Old Tom" wasn't a "gintle cat."

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Old Mike—I always loved Old Mike. That is what everybody called him, almost as soon as he came to live at Highmont. Some said it was because there was another Mike living in the village, but I never thought so. At first the other Mike was called "Little Mike," but when he grew up to be a man they were both little, and the name seemed not appropriate, so they went one being one "Old Mike" and the other "The Other Mike."

When I was young I was very good. The younger the better I was. I used to try to get the hired hands to go with me to "meeting."

I never succeeded with Old Mike but once, and then I remember I was very much frightened in the second hour of the sermon. The preacher was on the subject of Samson. Now, as long as he talked about the great strength of that giant it was all right, but the very moment he began to draw comparisons with other giants I could see that there was trouble in Old Mike's eye. I should have spoken of a peculiarity of some of the old-school expounders. They thought, to be impressive, that they must sing their sermons. This particular preacher was a member of that school in good standing. To say, however, that he sang his sermon does not mean that he had a musical voice; far from it. He rather sang it on a tremolo key with a rising and falling inflection, but with no regularity of tone whatever—sort of a "go as you please" style—but one which was not a pleasing style, by any means.

As I was saying, the preacher was on the subject of Samson. He was going along somewhere between the gates of Gaza and the hair cut, with the giant, when he stopped to dwell on the great strength of his subject. To make it more impressive, he was wont to repeat a good deal.

"Yes, dear brethering," he sang, "Samsing was a terrible giant. Of all the terrible giants that ever lived, Samsing was the terriblest." Old Mike grew uneasy; he seemed about to get up, but I held him down with my little hand as best I could, while the preacher went on, now fully wrought up with his subject:

"Yes, dear brethering, Samson was a terrible giant. Of all the terrible giants that ever lived, Samson was the terriblest. He could take all the other giants that ever lived and handle them as easy as a schoolmarm could handle the 'baby class.' "

This was too much for Old Mike's loyalty to one of the giants of the "ould country." He jumped up on the seat, and, trembling with rage, told the preacher: "Thot's a lie far ye. Thare's Filly Mackoo, fram the Narth of Oireland, who could whup hill's blazes out of him in wan minut," and out he stalked, pulling me after him. He never would go with me to meeting again after that.

The poor man died last summer. Some said he was 106 years old; some said he was only 90. His own family did not know, but nobody ever denied that he was "Old Mike."

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I must not forget "Brandy." I never knew why they called him that, but "Brandy" is the only name I now remember as belonging to him. People who knew said he was a typical Southern darkey. He came to Highmont after the "wah." Brandy asked me one day:

"Rube, du yu kno' why de dahkies nevah gits de mania pouchey—de delerium tremblers?"

"No, Brandy," said I, "I do not."

"Well, Rube, yu see it's dis way. De dahkies da dun drink, and da drink, and da drink, but jest foh da gits em dar munny gins out an' da dun haf tu stop."

I used to think, after that, that Brandy must be a very rich darkey.

One day he called from the barn, where he had been sent to shovel over a pile of wheat that was in danger of "heating." He called to me: "Rube, wha's dat tarnul skupe shuvul?" "Wait a minute till I think," said I, trying to recall where it had been left, but something took my attention just at that time. I forgot all abount Brandy until almost night, when I went out to the barn and found him sound asleep.

"Here, Brandy; wake up. What have you been doing all the afternoon?"

"Massah Rube, I wus dun waitin' foh yu tu fink, jes' like yu dun tole me tu."

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Then there was Jake, from Holland. Jake told us children such horrible stories about Holland that I have never been proud of my great grandmother's native home since. But Jake went to Baltimore, and from a "hired hand" he became a millionaire, so I have long ago forgiven him.

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Worse than hired hands are the hired girls. They run to witch stories and are never happier than when they can get the country boy so frightened that he cannot sleep. Her stories make him real glad that they once burned witches in Salem.

Now, with this line of education, is it any wonder that the country boy is not up to date?

On the other hand, is the city boy. All I know of him is what Bill told me. Bill says he is brought up more carefully than our sweet potato plants in the spring. He has a nurse to watch over him and a teacher all to himself, who has nothing to do but just see that his A, B, C's are correctly learned. He is sent away to college, where he learns football, boxing, rowing and other branches, and comes out a polished gentleman and joins a club called the Four Hundred.

I was greatly surprised one day when Bill told me all these things about the city boy, to have him finish with: "But, then, most of the great men of New York city were brought up in the country."

" The most remarkable instance I know, is of a large number of young men who came to New York from a little town in the Valley of Virginia."—*Page 37.*

CHAPTER VII.

"Between Ireland and the Valley of Virginia, New York is having a close call."

At this point the Biographer, who sat over at a side table, became very enthusiastic in praise of the "country bumpkin," as the smart boarder had called us. The Biographer had been a country boy himself and had much to say in praise of him. Said he, among other things:

"The most remarkable instance I know is of a large number of young men who came to New York from a little town in the Valley of Virginia.

"So many had left the village that those few who remained were as popular with the girls as the man at a summer resort.

"They came to this great city, and from a small beginning, as they were all poor, have worked their way up to the foremost positions in finance, commerce, the professions and politics—especially politics—so many having already become leaders and Assemblymen that between Ireland and the Valley of Virginia New York is having a close call.

"I would speak particularly of one of these Virginians, who, when he came, was very, very poor, but who is now a millionaire, and known throughout the length and breadth of the country as 'the Merchant Prince.'

"Men who were high in commercial life when he came to New York, and who refused him a place, have since worked for him as clerks.

"He has never forgotten his old home, and scarce a year passes that he does not send thousands of dollars, for various purposes, to Virginia.

"Monuments of stone and marble stand to-day in many a Southern city as gifts from this once poor country boy, but now generous man of wealth. Nor is his generosity bounded by a Southern line, as here and there are being placed statues of enduring bronze in many of our Northern parks.

"The declining days of many a pensionless old soldier, if it were known, are made pleasant days by this successful man.

"Yes, Ruben, your friend Bill is right. Take out of any city the country boy, with his bright, cheery push and energy, and that city will soon lose its position among its sisters."

This speech of the Biographer quite nettled the smart boarder, a young doctor, a city-bred man, who wanted to know, with much sarcasm in his inquiry, if "our late arrival"—meaning me—"was a fair specimen of the 'genus verd'?"

Everybody looked at me, but I made as though I did not understand his meaning, and made no reply to his rudeness.

This doctor was ever talking about the great advancement that medicine and surgery had made, and, like many other people who talk incessantly, he often said inappropriate things.

Just after his "genus verd" speech he spoke about a new discovery of medical science, and told us how that by means of heat and steam that a man might reduce his weight. The idea of speaking of such a thing at a boarding-house. Nobody seemed to appreciate it but the landlady, who smiled pleased-like.

I thought that just here was a good place to return his rudeness, so I said: "Why, that is nothing! Everybody always knew that a doctor could make a man 'poorer,' even without doing it by steam." The landlady didn't smile, but the rest did, and I felt less embarrassed about the doctor's Latin, which ever after he used only for medicinal purposes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I picked him up easy like and threw him out into the road. They guessed I was 'real' after that."

One morning I asked the young statesman, to whom I had taken a liking, if he would tell me how I could find the Bowery. I don't know why the question should have amused him so much, but he laughed a good deal before he said: "Ruben, if I were you I wouldn't go over there alone." But he told me the way, nevertheless, and I went down in the afternoon. It was not at all like Fifth avenue. I could not have believed it possible that there could be so vast a difference in two streets of the same city.

If I had bought clothes at every place where I was invited in I could have stocked four stores back home. They not only invited me in, but at some of the stores the whole family came out and insisted on taking me in bodily, and I think they felt really offended because I refused. But I was firm; I refused them all, as I was quite well satisfied with my own home suit.

I was much attracted by places they called museums, where they had more strange things than I had ever heard of, much less seen. They had calves with more heads than they could possibly use; snakes larger than any old "toper" ever dreamed of; monkeys that looked enough like Dennis O'Donahue to have been his own brother; women four times as large as old Mrs. Smithers at home; men who were so thin that they rattled when they walked. I asked one of them how he got so slender. He said that he had always boarded since he came to New York, but I couldn't see what that had to do with it—I guess he couldn't have fully understood my question.

These museums nearly all had Red Jacket's scalp, and Tecumseh's tomahawk; but what I could not understand at all was why so many of them had the head of Guiteau, done up in alcohol. I should have thought, after his terrible deed, that he would have been satisfied to let just one of them have it; but it was in all of them, nearly as large as life, each with a certificate from Guiteau himself that "this is my head—the only genuine one in town."

I forgot to say that I did not have to pay a cent to get in any of the museums, and I certainly must have seen them all. When I would come up in front of one of them and stop, the crowd that followed me from one to the other always stopped, too. The fellow at the door—I didn't know any of them from Adam—would always say: "Rube, step right in; I heard you was comin'." All I had to do was to walk in. The crowd that was along, however, had to pay. One or two of the fellows who were following along wanted to know if I was "real." That was the queerest question I ever had put to me. "Of course I am real," I answered, indignantly.

At one of these museums they had a regular school exhibition—only they didn't speak real pieces or have nice dialogues—like we had at Robbin's Exhibition. They just sang the silliest songs I had ever heard, and said in a number of places, and in sub-cellar voices, that "the villain still pursued her." If "her" was anything like those I saw on the platform, I would have been sorry for the villain. I never saw such dressing, or the lack of it, rather. Some of the girls who took part didn't have any skirt dresses on at all, and what they did wear was as tight as a hunter's buckskin suit after a hard rain.

Why, I just had to turn my head away until I got used to it—which must have taken me two or three minutes.

What took my attention most of all was a big "rassler" they had. That fellow could throw down every one who would wrestle with him. The man who ran the exhibition came out to the edge of the platform after the wrestler had thrown every one down he could get hold of. Said he: "Ladies and gentlemen—Professor Throwum, whom you see before you to-day is the champeen rasler of New York city. He expected the champeen of Weehawkin this afternoon, but we have just received a telegram that he had missed the ferry boat and that he cannot reach here in time. We are very sorry, but rather than to disappoint you, the management has concluded to offer ten dollars to the man whom the professor cannot throw down in four minutes, and to make it fifteen dollars if the man can throw the professor." The whole house—and it was nearly full—rose up to cheer. I felt my blood boil. I, the champion of Highmont and vicinity, I just held on to the bench and never said a word, but when that fellow who ran the show came out again and said, "I guess you women are all cowards," I just couldn't stand it, and got right up. They all knew me, somehow, and cried out: "Reuben, go up and get your fifteen dollars."

I went—I could take no dare like that. The man up there turned to the crowd of people and asked: "Has this boy any friends here?"

"Yes; we are all his friends."

"No, I don't mean that. Has he any relatives to look after him after the Professor gets through with him? No one? Well," then to me, "my dear young man, to what address will we send you? Have you any choice of hospital?"

I knew that he was only trying to scare me, so I told him: "I will not trouble you to send me to any of them, as they are not looking for me to-day."

At that the crowd stood right up and shook hands with itself, and said: "Reuben, you're game!" All this while I was looking at the Professor to see how large he was. He was smaller but much heavier than I. I run to length. People used to call me Abe—because, as they said, I looked so much like Abe Lincoln, only that I was not so good looking as Abe.

The manager began again: "Is there an insurance agent in the house? If so, please step up and write a policy for our brave young friend. None here? Then, Ruben, you will have to carry your own risk."

"None to carry," I told him, and the crowd was with me. When he called "Ready!" I never saw as quick a man in my life as that Professor. He had hold of me, and before I knew what he was doing he nearly had me off my feet; but I soon got myself righted, and in order that I might, at least, be sure of the ten dollars, I did nothing for the first four minutes, except to keep him from throwing me. The man with the watch cheated me out of one minute, but the crowd made such an outcry against it that he had to call "Time!" and they made him pay me the money on the spot. I wanted to stop at that, but the crowd would not hear to it. They had been so friendly toward me that I felt to quit would be treating them unfairly. So I told the manager that, "I will only take the other five dollars to please my friends."

"Young man, your friends will be a good deal harder to please than you think for." He did not speak with the same loud tone that he had used before. Again, "Ready!" This time I was watching.

During the five minutes we had wrestled I had caught most of the Professor's trips, and found that he did not know the one we used back home. We had not been together much over half a minute when I used the "grapevine" on him. Here's where my long legs came into play. I caught him so quick that he could not gather himself, and threw him so hard that I was really scared. Would you believe it—the crowd wanted to get on the platform with me! They were standing on top of the seats and trying to lift the very roof with their voices. Robbin's Exhibition was no comparison to this one for real, downright enjoyment for the crowd, if one were to judge by the noise they made; and that Robbin's affair, too—the one great event from which all Highmont entertainments have dated and been compared—quite the finest thing that ever happened in all those parts. Of course, I don't mean to say that this Bowery exhibition was as good—I only say that there was more noise and appearance of enjoyment. When the man gave me the other five dollars he said that if I would come and "rassel" every day he would pay me fifty dollars a week and one "benefit" a month. "Now, while that seemed a fortune to me, I had to tell him that I had not come to New York to "rassel," but to find my friend Bill. The crowd wanted to know if I were going to the "hospital," and if I wanted to "get my life insured," or if I had any "relative" to look after me. The man did not take nearly so much interest in all this as he did when he was doing the talking. I had only wrestled to learn some new trips—I learned a number.

I was going along quietly about five o'clock—sort o' between museums, as it were—when a young man stepped up to me from a saloon door and said: "Say, young feller, we're onto yer. Now git out." I told him that I guessed he wasn't onto me, and that if he was he had better get off before I found it out. At that the crowd laughed. He got very angry, and without the least provocation went as though he would hit me; but I picked him up, easy like, and threw him out into the road and walked on. I wanted to know if there was anybody else "onto" me, but there didn't seem to be any, so I walked on to the next museum. As I went along, after I had tossed the fellow out into the road, I heard several of my "followers" say, "I guess he is real."

That night at the supper table I told all about my experiences of the afternoon, and they were greatly interested.

A very thin-looking young man at the end of the table, who had not spoken before, asked in a very gentle, clear voice: "I beg your pardon, my dear sir, but what did I understand you to say you had earned with five and three-quarters minutes of actual effort?" I told him that I had been paid fifteen dollars.

"And pardon me further," said he; "what did you say they had offered you for each week?"

"Fifty dollars a week," said I, "and only fifteen minutes' work twice a day, and something they called a 'benefit' once a month if I would stay three months." He did not address me further, but I heard him say to the man sitting beside him: "I fear I have missed my calling."

The Statesman told me the next morning that but little was known of this young man, further than that he had graduated a few months before at one of the great colleges of the country, and that he had been what was known as "medal man." He took all the prizes, and was a very great favorite at the college. The newspapers all said when he graduated that "His future is assured."

"He came to New York," said the Statesman, "and has boarded here ever since. For three months now he eats but one meal a day, and the landlady—good soul that she is!—says that for the past two months he has paid her nothing, but that he will, as he is 'so good.' Nobody knows what he does, but we do notice him growing frailer each week, and his cheeks more sunken." Really, I was so sorry for him that I could hardly keep the tears from my eyes when I heard this about him. When he came to supper next day I met him in the hallway, and told him that when I made any money real easy that I had a habit of giving it away to the first man who took my fancy, and asked him if he would let me give him the fifteen dollars I had made in five and three-quarters minutes. I said that if he refused I would be put to the trouble of finding some one else to give it to.

"My dear friend, I cannot take this money as a gift, and I have nothing to give you in exchange for it—no, I cannot accept it."

"I'll tell you how we can fix that. I will loan it to you, and take your note, and you can pay it when you can." He gave me his note, which I tore up when he was not looking, and threw it into the fire. The Statesman said afterward: "The preacher must have 'struck it,' as he has paid the landlady some money;" but I never said a word.

CHAPTER IX.

"A debt of honor has no limitation."

The bald-headed Broker told me one day that he would like to help the "preacher," as he called the "medal man," but that his experience in giving money to help "deserving (?) persons" had been very unsatisfactory—that very few of all the number were worthy of even a passing notice. I said something about the "bread on the water" story.

"Yes," said he, "and if you keep it up you will find it all end in a 'bread *and* water' story." I felt like calling him a heartless, cruel man; but he told me some of his experience in helping people.

He said that he had been what the boys call "a real good thing," and that they had "pushed him along."

"I think," said he, beginning as though to tell a story to excuse himself for his heartlessness, "it must have been in about 188—. I was then on Twenty-fourth street. At the same place where I boarded was a young man from my own home in the West—Ohio. He was studying medicine. Three days before he was to graduate I missed him. Nobody knew where Dan was, and yet all of us wondered not a little, as we felt the time was short. Dan was not a regular drinker, but would occasionally take a day or two 'off.' The night before graduating day a messenger brought me a badly-soiled envelope. I opened it and found what was meant to be a letter. By great and persevering effort I made out the following:

" 'Shay—fer shee good name—your home—cum an' git me—'Few dont cum en git me—an fix—me—up—we are lost—termorrer's zee day—'few ony cum an git me I'le bles you til dyin day—an pay you back—ever cent—hav spent all my mony—a'nt got a d—— cent—left. Am at Odermans—up stairs—back rum—god sake—cum an git me—an—cum quik——'

"There was no name to it, but I knew it was from Dan. Say, Ruben, if you had seen him you would have been touched—I was, to the extent of $40. He was a sight. I had to take him, and get him clothes from top to toe—fixed him all up, and he graduated with honors, as he was a brilliant man, handsome as a Greek god, and a genial good fellow when himself. He got a position at once in the greatest asylum up the State."

"Did he pay you back the $40?" I asked.

"No," said he. "I was then rich, and did not need it. Years later I met with reverses, and wrote to Dan for the money—he having prospered. I explained my situation, and that I was actually in sore need of the money. Imagine my feelings when he wrote back: 'Your claim is outlawed by the statute of limitation.'

"All I could reply to that was: 'Dan, a debt of honor has no limitation;' but he never wrote to me again. The 'bread' has never 'returned,' though 'many days' have passed, and some of them very hungry ones."

I had nothing to say, but wondered if there were many like Dan. I asked him if his experience as Good Samaritan had always been ill.

"Few exceptions. Why, I once saved a young man's life who was sick unto death in a boarding house. I took him to a hospital, and had him placed in a private room, and paid liberally that he might have the best of care. He got well, after weeks of delirium. He, too, prospered, but has not only not repaid me the expenses of his illness, but has since defrauded me out of thousands of dollars himself and made it possible for me to lose thousands more through others. But, Ruben, lest you think that all the world is bad, with no good in it, I will tell you of an exception in my varied experience, which has always been to me a source of pleasure. I was at college in D——, Ohio. In the winter of 1866, near the middle of the term, one of the boys, who knew me well, said: 'I will have to give up—my money is all gone.' Being young and with a rich father, I could not appreciate what it meant to reach the end of one's means.

"'Why don't you send home for more?' I asked.

"I have no place to send. I am all alone in the world.' Well, we were soon a committee of ways and means, and by next day we found that $27 would buy a complete stencil 'outfit.' I took cheap quarters, 'boarded myself,' and thus saved out of my allowance the $27 which we had at once sent away for the 'outfit.' It came. The boys who, for 'advertising purposes,' had been let into the scheme, all needed 'stencil plates,' and he was soon making money. He went through college and graduated with honor, as he was a remarkably fine student. He traveled in Europe to study its educational systems, paying his way with his pen. He was a brilliant writer, and found no trouble in the sale of his 'European articles.' On his return to America, he sent me the old loan, with compound interest. To-day he is one of the big educators of this country, and I am proud of him."

"And again, Ruben," continued the broker, "I call to mind another instance for the credit side. This story has in it a bit of romance.

"Like yourself, I was reared in the country. Several miles from the home place my father owned another farm, to which we used often to go. We had to pass through a lane off from the main road to reach it. Beside this lane stood a log cabin. I used often to watch a large family of children playing about it. Among the number was one in particular—a little girl. She was not like the rest. She cared not for dolls and toys which other children loved. She was ever drawing pictures, and, not knowing anything about paints, she used as colors the juices of berries and flowers.

"Her work, for a child, was so remarkable that I took an interest in her. I found for her, at a near-by town, a drawing teacher. Her progress was so rapid that she soon had learned all that this teacher could impart. She had learned, however, much of the principle of drawing, and worked on at her home. When she grew older I sent her away to a great city, where she became an artist of note. She painted for me many pictures 'in part payment,' as she used often to say. Those pictures I shall always keep.

"I told you there was a romance connected with this story. There was to be in the great city an exhibition of paintings. Artists from many States brought their productions. My protege was of the number. Her work attracted much attention. During the thronged hours it was hard to get near her masterpiece. The subject of this was a simple one, but, oh, how she had brought out the detail! As you looked at it, you could almost see the children move who were playing about a little log cabin that stood beside a narrow lane. At the gate leaned a young man watching the children at play. Yes, Ruben, the face of the young man might have been taken for mine when I was younger. But to the romance. A very wealthy gentleman from an adjoining State purchased the picture, paying for it a large sum. He sought out the artist, and—well, my protege is now his wife.

"The only thing she has to remind her of the log cabin is the masterpiece, which hangs in the art gallery of her palatial home."

I just felt that these two stories made up for many "Dans," and I was glad I had given the fifteen dollars to the poor young man.

CHAPTER X.

"Feed a hungry man and he will feel grateful to you till his appetite is gone."

The bald-headed broker was a queer combination. He was a success and yet a failure. If the enterprise depended on his own effort, he succeeded, as nothing could daunt him or turn him aside from the object in view, but the moment he had to depend upon another the enterprise would fail—seemingly no reason for it, but it would fail. There was nothing too large for him to attempt, and he was never caught unaware. He might go to a capitalist with a proposition requiring a few thousand dollars, and when told that, "We do not entertain anything so small as that," he would at once offer one requiring millions and show its feasibility. I used often to think he had little to encourage him, yet he was always cheerful. "Look on the bright side," he would say; "and, like the late 'Brick' Pomeroy, if you have no bright side, take a white-wash brush and paint one. Many times I have run out of paint or worn the brush to the very wood, and had nothing but the black wall to look upon, and yet before it got all dark a little ray of sunshine would come, and I was again happy."

One of his enterprises has since succeeded, and he is once more very rich, but he is the same genial man, with a kind word for the most lowly. Some of the boys say that he is again "a real good thing," but they also say that they can't "push him along" like they used to. When he regained his fortune he took great pleasure in going about paying back, sometimes ten-fold, for favors shown him when he was "down." He told me one time, however, that he soon got around, and that it had cost him a very little money.

The adversities of this quaint man had made him a bit of a philosopher. He used often to invite me to his room to talk. Why I do not know; but he seemed never to tire of having me with him. I would from time to time jot down the short, quaint sentences with which his conversation was full. These gems of philosophy always fitted in. I have often since thought that he felt I needed advice, and took this means of giving it from his own full experience. Here are a few illustrations which I find among my memoranda:

"Ruben, many a man, famous in some inland city, finds himself dwindle into insignificance on coming to New York city—the great Mental Cemetery of America.

"Make few friends and acquaintances; the latter will use you in their need, and the former will forget you in your adversity.

"The man you may help in poverty will not remember you in his prosperity.

"Boast not of wealth; it creates jealousy in the rich and envy in the poor, and only makes of you a mark for the designing 'sharper.'

"Never borrow a dollar—the lender will own you for all time.

"Ruben, you will find New York a city of shams. You may see the millionaire clad as an old farmer, and many a youth living on a few cents a day in full dress of an evening at some free entertainment, putting on all the 'airs' of a prosperous man.

"It is not the coat that makes the man. Many a large, flashy tie covers a torn bosom.

"Prove all you hear. The most valuable bits of information are often about things that never happened.

"Lend a dollar this week, and the borrower will be angry at you if you do not lend him two next.

"Feed a hungry man, and he will feel grateful to you until his appetite is gone.

"What you learn, learn thoroughly. Half knowledge often marks the ignorant person.

"Never accept a free ticket from an actor. The suppers he will 'play' you for it would pay for a box."

Oh, how well I could appreciate this last "gem!" The remembrance of the ticket that the young actor (?) had once given me came vividly up before me. I thought of the many suppers I had given him since for that one ticket, and yet when I think of how I did enjoy that play—the very first I had ever seen—I can't feel that I paid too much for it. It was a new life to me, that play—it was so real. The only thing that marred the pleasure of the play was that "actor." He had gone with me, as he said, to explain it, but I soon found that his explanation only spoiled it for me. I might be in the very middle of a good cry at the misfortunes of some person on the stage, when he would try to affect an entrance in my side by means of a very sharp elbow, and then go on to tell me how much better he could have played the part—"far better than that 'gilly' on the stage!" To him all the actors were a "set of gillies, anyhow." The only gratification I ever got out of the matter was to know that the nearest he ever came to doing anything on the stage was that he finally got a position as scene shifter in an "East Side" theatre.

CHAPTER XI.

"Don't frown; it wrinkles the face. Better wrinkle it with a smile, if you are determined to wear wrinkles."

We called him Knickerbocker, as no one at the house knew his name. He associated with no one, and seldom spoke to any one. He took no part in the table talk, and seemed to be happy only when let alone. He appeared to belong to another generation—one long passed. He was old, yet young. His hair was white, though his handsome face was that of a man of thirty years or under. Even a recluse will talk at times. The subject which unlocked his lips was, "The society of to-day."

"There is no society to-day," said he. "There are none of the 'old families' of New York left. All now are of the 'nauvoo reech.' When I was in society"—with a marked emphasis on the "I"—"Second avenue was the fashionable centre—the great promenade. Of an evening you would see the gentlemen and ladies out walking, the ladies with their hair streaming down their backs, wearing black mantillas over their heads. The gentlemen never thought of calling, save in a carriage. If a gentleman took a lady to the theatre he always furnished the flowers and her gloves. Society was governed only by Family—then. Money had nothing to do with position. No, there is no society to-day. I never go out any more. I have not gone out for years. I feel all alone."

He was. No one cared whether he came or stayed away.

I could not help asking: "Mr. Knickerbocker, where does what you call Society begin? How many generations does it take to make a gentleman or a lady? The sending of flowers and the buying of the lady's gloves is custom. If custom changed, it would then be improper. As well say that, as the Bowery was then the great promenade, it should be so to-day. By your view of Society, the man who, without any assistance, works himself up from a lowly, but respectable origin, and gains riches, and by study and observation acquires all the accomplishments which the best people in the land say are the correct customs to observe, is not a gentleman because he hasn't 'family'—because his father before him had not done the same things." I had talked on at length because he did not deign to reply to any of my questions or comments. He simply looked at me as beneath his notice. This made me a little angry. I tried to be sarcastic. I said: "I once knew of a father who drove his own 'four-in-hand' to a carriage, lived in his own palace, and led the 'world of fashion.' His son after him drove 'two-in-hand' to a truck; and, I suppose simply because the truck belonged to some one else, he was known and treated as a 'hired hand.' His 'old family tree' cut no figure whatever. Yes, Mr. Knickerbocker, I guess that you are right—there is no Society to-day, if a man may be called a gentleman solely because his father before him was one. That which has taken the place of 'Society' demands that the person must have more than mere 'family' to warrant a place among the best people—call the 'best' whatever you will."

Mr. Knickerbocker, at that, replied in the same vein. His first question was meant to be crushing—short and conclusive, even scornful. "What do you know about

Society—what the 'best' demand—you, whose knowledge of the 'best' was gained, no doubt, in the 'corner grocery store' of some back-woods country village, where the great burden of conversation is: 'What's Bushon goin' ter plant in ther hill field by them woods?' or 'Have yer heard thet Luis Miller run a splinter in his thumb?' "

"That is correct," said I. "I know very little about the customs of 'the best'—in fact, nothing, except what Bill has told me. Bill goes out sometimes. He says he sees the very old society in society, and some of the new of New York. He told me once how that he called on one of the very, very old families, who had been Dutch so far back that the very records were gone to decay. He spent an evening at this house, and the burden of conversation in this case, Bill said, was the illness of one of their dogs—an insignificant cur that lay on the floor. I may be deficient in taste, but give me 'the corner grocery,' for Bushon will get his 'field' planted, and Miller's thumb will get well, but the 'cur' of the very old 'family' may hang on for many years."

Mr. Knickerbocker was very silent thereafter—more so than ever. I could but think that had he taken conditions as they exist, he had been far happier—especially had he done his part toward trying to make the world better, rather than to exclude himself from it because it was not as he had once known it. I remarked to the Reporter, who sat at my left—speaking low like: "I must have seen some of the 'old society' promenading on the Bowery the day I was over. The ladies were wearing their hair 'hanging down their backs,' but they wore no 'mantillas.' " The Reporter asked me the color of their hair. When I told him, he merely said: "No, these could not have been any of the old families—the color was too golden." Just as though the color had anything to do with it!—but I did not reply. I just sat and thought, and thought. As I looked at Mr. Knickerbocker I moralized on things. If you don't care for the world and want to withdraw from it, do so—it will not miss you, it will not seek out your hiding-place. If you are not pleased with the changing customs, don't protest—they will change anyhow. Don't frown; it wrinkles the face. Better wrinkle it with a smile, if you are determined to wear wrinkles.

At the conclusion of the social controversy with Mr. Knickerbocker, and when I had thought the subject at an end, the man from "Lunnon" adjusted his one-eyed spectacles and began on his "Impressions of America." Said he: "You have very queer social customs in this country. There is no standard. The lowest strata of society in this generation may be the leaders of the next. The mediocre of the city, if they fail of recognition, only need to go into some of your suburban towns, and by pure assurance and a little money, rule the social 'sets' of the place. They may be the veriest snobs, but your patient people submit most graciously, and seem happy to receive from them a bow of recognition.

"It has often been a source of amusement to me to watch these 'snobs' trying to do 'the proper thing.'

"In dear old England it is not so. Everybody there knows his place and is happy. There is not that heart-burning which you see here, where people are continually trying to reach a social position, for which they will sacrifice everything else to attain, and when they have attained it they are not content, for many of them know that they are still only mediocre.

"See how proud the highest of your people become when our real society in England gives them a little recognition; and when our Queen consents to have them presented to her it is an event worthy a cablegram.

"The recipient of that recognition becomes thereafter a person a little bit higher than the rest of her country women.

"No, my friends, America has no social standard. Even your 'smart set,' from whom 'the correct' is supposed to emanate, look to a seller of wine, imported from another city, to know what is correct. And if, perchance, one of our actresses—whose name at home may be most unsavory—should ask aid for some cause that pleased her fancy, these people, whose one aim in life is social, will come and go at her bidding, as though she were a social queen."

I was about to answer him, but the Statesman gave me a look that said, "Don't say a word!" He afterward told me that the Englishman was right; that he had described conditions very true to life.

Then I set to wondering how long it would be till we would have a standard purely American, and not bow to the social customs of any land but our own—wondering, too, how far distant the day when those customs would be ruled by the heart rather than by the vanity of our people.

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The "impressions" of this Englishman were, to say the least, subject to changes by a longer residence in America. He asked me one day what State I had come from. I told him Pennsylvania.

"Oh! I see; away out on the frontier!" The Statesman must have been rather personal when he remarked to me, sort of as an aside, "He judges from your clothes more than from his knowledge of your geography, I guess."

"Yes," said I to the Englishman, paying no attention to the Statesman.

"Is the Indian very bad out there?" he asked.

"Oh, he certainly is! The worst, in fact, that I have ever seen!" said I, having in mind the one "Toppy" Troupe had cut out of a block of wood for his cigar store.

This Briton believed everything he heard.

One day the subject of pensions to our soldiers came up, when he remarked:

"I think your Government very liberal with its pensions. A man told me the other day about a soldier in one of your wars who got scared into a fit when he was about to go into battle, and that he had been drawing a pension on that one fit ever since!"

Oh, but this man from "Lunnon" was credulous!

CHAPTER XII.

"It isn't olways the yungist that lives the langist."
"It is better to be capable of doing one little thing well than to be able to tell well of the great things other people can do."
"Ann Street, the dumping ground for genius."

I found among the "hired" people here quite as odd characters as in the country. One day at the table I asked old Mrs. Crowley, one of the waitresses, as they called them—but she always seemed to be too old for that word: "Mrs. Crowley, what has become of that pretty little black-eyed girl who used to help you at the waiting?"

"Is it Anny ye manes? Pore leetle Anny! It's ded she is."

I was surprised and sorry, for Anna was a very bright young girl.

"Why, Mrs. Crowley, Anna was so young!"

"Thru far ye, Mister Rubing, thru far ye. She was yung, but it isn't ollways the yungist that lives the langist," and she wiped her poor old eyes with the corner of her apron.

This same old lady asked me one day: "Mister Rubing, phat is the grate poile ov papers in yer rume?"

"Why, Mrs. Crowley, I am writing a book all about my experience in New York."

"Ah, me! an' it's a buke ye are wroitin'! Ah, Mister

Rubing! an' it is shurely a moity foine buke—a virry butiful buke, indade!"

"What! Have you been reading my manuscript?"

"Radin' iz it ye say? Oi rade? Ah, Mister Rubing! nary a single bit can Oi rade. It's the wroitin'—the wroitin', Oi mane. It is so butiful!"

I could not help wishing that certain of my friends had heard that compliment.

The man whose sole excellence lies in being able to tell well about what others can do well was also a boarder at our house. He used to tell us about how this or that actor could act; how well this singer could sing; what a wonderful orator was Mr. X., or what this or that great personage could do, better than anybody else. He used to make the rest of us feel most insignificant by the self-important manner in which he would speak of the accomplishments of others. I thought at the time that he was a unique character, but have long since learned that he is a most numerous personage. Every large boarding-house has him in full size, and, no doubt, will have him to the end of time, as one of the ills of this world—and possibly, too, in the next, where he will know some "harper" who can "out-harp any harper you ever knew."

I have long since learned this: It is far better to be capable of doing even one little thing well than to be able to tell well the great things that other people can do.

What I noticed as remarkable at my boarding place was the diversity of the callings of the boarders. This limited the subjects for conversation only to the number at the table.

There was the inventor and the author. The inventor had just been granted a patent on a small article, which was sure to bring him in a vast fortune. He often told what he would do for us when his "article" got to selling.

"Why," said he in his inventor's enthusiasm, "there is an untold fortune in it. Better than a gold mine. There are, in the first place, the States of the Union. Then comes the counties with their townships and school districts. Why, men, just think of the vast number of all these sub-divisions! I will sell rights—State, county and townships. I will establish a great manufacturing plant in the East and live like a king. You must all feel at home in the palace I will build."

The author was little less enthusiastic. His book would cost but twenty-five cents, and sell readily at a dollar, as every one in the whole land would be unhappy without a copy. The sale in consequence would be limited alone by the capacity of his great presses. Both of these men left shortly after. I used often to wonder why I never saw the book or heard of the invention; but one day, long after, I was passing through Ann street—the dumping ground for genius—and on two of the little push-carts I saw the book on the one and the invention on the other, offered—but not selling—at five cents apiece.

CHAPTER XIII.

"'Swat him one, Ike—swat him one!' And that pesky boy up and threw the whole pot of paste over me, as I left the editor's office four steps at a time."

I was much entertained by the newspaper reporter who sat at my left at table. He always had so many things to tell me that he had seen from day to day. I asked him how he got things to report, and if it was hard work. "No," said he; "you see an occurrence and simply write it up. The more important it is the more money you get for the story." Everything was a "story" with him. I thought—at the time—that this was possibly why I had so often heard the newspapers spoken of as so full of untruths, but I have since learned that I was wrong, and that this was not the reason. After that I, too, used to watch for "stories," that I might tell him and help him in his business.

One day I went over on the top of the Palisades, which the Statesman had told me was a fine trip to take, as the view was so beautiful up and down the Hudson river, with New York lying just across, to the east. While going through the wood, over an unfrequented foot-path, I found a man who had hung himself. "Here," said I to myself, "is a 'story' that will startle them." I remembered what a time there was when old Swisher hung himself at a place back in the mountains, about ten miles from Highmont. Farmers stopped plowing, the blacksmith left a horse only half shod, the postoffice closed up its doors, and even the "sewing circle," which met that afternoon at "gramma" Hurd's, stopped its gossip about the new doctor, while everybody who could get a vehicle or a horse got quickly ready to go and see the sight of a man hanging. Those who had no other way walked. When we got to the wood where the old man was hanging, waiting for the coroner, you would have thought it was a Methodist camp-meeting, or a county fair on "racing day." People kept coming until, I am sure, there was nobody left at home to look after the children—but for that matter, there must have been few left to look after. "The Swisher suicide" was an event from which dated many an incident. And here I had found a man who had left the world by the same "line." "This is too important," thought I, "to give to the Reporter. I will write it up, and it will bring some more 'easy money' to loan (?) to the poor preacher. Yes, I will write it up—I won't miss a single point." I wrote it as graphically as possible, making it as long a "story" as I could. The Reporter had told me that they paid by the length as well as for the importance of the "story."

I picked out the paper that always boasted that "what you saw in it was so." I did this that I might know that my first "story" would be believed.

"Is the editor in?" I asked. The office-boy who was pasting something in a big book pointed with his brush to a man sitting at a desk, to whom I approached with: "Do you buy stories here?"

"Yes," said he, eager-like, "if they are good ones."

"Well, I have a great one for you," I replied, almost feeling the money in my pocket already.

He got up hurriedly and asked: "What is it? what is it?" I gave it to him, and stood waiting. He looked it over, sat down, then looked at me with a sort of a "where'd - you - drop - from - anyhow" sneer, and said: "Young man, you're new; this thing is worth nothing to us."

"What! a man hangs himself, and you are not glad to hear it!"

"No; we can't use this stuff." And he went back to his writing, paying no attention to me—no more than if I had been a mere spring poet. Well, I was possibly a little hasty, but I could not help telling him in rather a high key: "Hereafter, sir, every time I find a man who has hung himself I will just let him hang; and, sir," as I sidled off toward the door at the head of the stairs, "I hope you will be the first one I find."

He called, quick like, to the boy: "Swat him one, Ike—swat him one!" And, do you believe it, that pesky office-boy threw a whole bucket of soft paste over me as I went down stairs four steps at a time. At the bottom of the steps I fell into the arms of the Reporter, who wanted to know: "Whatever in the world is the matter, Ruben?"

"I have been to see the Editor with a 'story,' " said I.

Would you believe it, while I was in a barber-shop paying two dollars to get that tarnal paste removed, that enterprising Reporter was "writing up a story" about how "Ruben saw the Editor." He told me at supper that he had sold his "story" for six dollars. I have done no newspaper work since.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Being of an unselfish nature, I wanted to know if there were many people killed in the wreck."

Ever since the evening I told of my experience with the wrestler at the museum, one of the boarders who had not spoken to me before had been very pleasant toward me. He was a quiet young man—so much so that he reminded me of the Preacher—and I wondered if he, too, were not a "medal man." He must have been, for once when his coat front was thrown back, I could see two or three gold medals. I liked him, for he was so agreeable in manner, and used very pretty language. He was not thin like the other preacher, and then he never missed a meal. He even looked prosperous, so that I didn't feel sorry for him as I did for the other.

One evening after supper, while the Statesman was telling about some more mistakes the President had made—these errors on the part of the President were no end of worry to the Statesman—this young man came up to us, and asked if we would take a walk with him. We accepted his invitation and started out together.

When we came to a large building all lighted up, the young man said it was a club-house, and that he was a member of the club, with the right to take us in. (I didn't fully appreciate those last three words until later.) We went in. I had never before seen anything so fine as that club-house. It was a revelation of beauty to my inexperienced eyes. Everybody seemed to know our friend and treated him with such marked deference that I could but wonder: "Who is this man that all should treat him with so much respect?" He showed us through the library, then took us through the various rooms, where I saw more queer things than I had ever seen in one house before. There were swords, and little wire baskets, big clubs with stripes all around them, and mittens nearly as big as baby pillows, and many strange things I knew no names for. I asked the young man what those "baby pillows" were for, as I could see no possible use for such great clumsy mittens. He said they were used on the hands while "boxing." I told him that when we boxed at Highmont we used only our hands. He then asked if I ever boxed at my town. Well, I felt so much like laughing that I could hardly keep my face straight, I wanted to laugh so much; but I kept quiet and smothered my mirthful feelings as best I could until I finally told him to "Ask the boys back home!"

"How would you like to put on the gloves with me?" he asked. Now, while I felt my boxing blood beginning to boil, I somehow liked this young man so well that I sort o' hated to hurt him, and I told him as much. "No; when I get excited I forget myself and strike very hard. I might hurt you unintentionally, and this I would afterward regret—but too late. No, I don't think we had better put them on." He did look so frail alongside of my big, awkward frame that I just couldn't have the heart to risk hitting him one of my sledge-hammer blows.

"Come, now, Ruben, you need have no fear. I am used to hard hits."

"Well, I will put them on and will try very hard not to forget myself; but remember if I do hurt you, it will be because of my becoming unduly excited."

It was so different with the professor at the museum. Now, when I threw him so hard that he nearly broke in two I had no feeling whatever for him; but this was a different case. Here was a fine young fellow whom I was living with—saw him every day—member of my own family, as it were; then he was so gentle and meek that I felt almost mean to thus take advantage of him, but he insists and he must take the result of his rashness. By this time there were a good many in the room watching us, and still more coming from all parts of the house. It was quite a good show to see a frail little man standing up before a big fellow like me—a man who could out-box any one in all our country. These people must have expected a good show, the way they did crowd into that room. I began to weaken when I saw the way they kept coming. I didn't mind boxing when there was no one around but the Statesman, but to make this fine youth appear insignificant before his friends I just would not do it, and went as though I were going to take off the gloves, when just at that time a man whom I had not before noticed called out, "Ready!" and the young man was up before me. I had thought that the professor in the museum was quick, but this one could go four blocks before the other one had started up the pike. Just as I had feared, I forgot myself and struck a terrible blow right at the young man's head. Strange to say it didn't hurt him even a little bit—for he wasn't there. Every time I struck I hit him just where the first blow had landed.

All at once there was a bolt of lightning struck that beautiful building and seemed to fairly shatter things. I didn't come to for more than a half-hour; and when I did, being of an unselfish nature, I wanted to know if there were many people killed in the wreck. I was greatly surprised when I saw that the room had not been shattered. I learned two things that night—first, that the meek young man was the boxing professor of the club, and the other was that country boys had better confine themselves to wrestling.

CHAPTER XV.

"The worship of gold has always been more devout with me when I could carry the idol in my own pocket."

Like Mr. Knickerbocker, the young Frenchman at my left two seats at the table had been so quiet that his presence was hardly noticed.

He came and went without a word. He never joined in the conversation, and yet he seemed ever intent on listening to the others talking.

He broke the silence one evening when the subject of "inherited fortunes" was being discussed. The Reporter, that day, had interviewed a man who was the prospective heir to a vast fortune in England.

"He is sure to get it, too," said the Reporter. "He says there is no doubt, as he has a record that reaches back over a hundred years to the landing in America of his great-grandfather."

"Ze gintleman nevair ze fortune veel receive," was the broken comment of our Frenchman. All eyes were at once upon him. The doubt cast upon the Reporter's confident assertion was a challenge which that gentleman took up with: "Why do you think he will not come into the inheritance?"

"I have much travail in ze beautiful Americk; I find in ze litteel village and in ze grate citie peepil who high fortunes veel inhereet from ze Inglish, but I nevair zee ze peepil who hav a franc yet inhereet. Evair one hav ze no doubt, same like ze gintleman you meet zis day. All hav ze grate confidanz, but none gets ze fortune.

"If ze millions, ze peepil of Americk zay veel com to zem von day, vould com, zen ze greate banque of ze Inglish vould pe empt and all ze land zold and ze gold zent to Americk in many sheeps.

"Ze Inglish like ze gold verai much and no let ze gold com to Americk. Ze Inglish make ze law to keep ze gold. No, ze gintleman you meet veel nevair ze fortune inhereet."

The Reporter must have known that there was much truth in what the Frenchman said, but he turned the argument by asking:

"Why is it that you French are so jealous of the English? Why do you always speak ill of them? Why do you think that nothing good can be done by that nation?"

"If ze truth be ill—and I speek ze truth—I speek it with no jealous. If many peepil expect ze vast fortune, and no peepil get ze von franc, zen zair must be ze grate wrong. Ze Inglish make ze law to keep ze gold. My own La Belle France make ze law zat ze gold shall be distribut. Ze great fortune always ees expect from ze Inglish and nevair from ze French. My countrie make ze honeest law. Ven ze reech tie een France ze heirs vas all hunt out from evair place een ze vorld, and ze gold honeest distribut.

"I hav ze von reech aunt, vera old. Eef she tie zis veek ze conzul all ovair ze vorld vind me and dell me, and I ged my part zoon, and no hav to expect alvays and nevair ged."

Strange to relate, that very week the Reporter came home one evening greatly excited. He had seen in a paper an advertisement which quite accurately described our Frenchman. It had been inserted by the French consul, asking information that would lead to the finding of one M. La Fetra.

When the paper was shown to the Frenchman he read the advertisement and handed it back to the Reporter without comment, simply thanking him.

The next evening we learned that the "reech aunt" had died and that M. La Fetra was one of the heirs.

I never could have believed that prospective fortune could so change a man in the eyes of people who had before scarcely noticed him. The good fortune changed M. La Fetra less than any one else at the house.

Uncertainty as to the amount of an inheritance never places the prospective fortune anywhere this side of "vast."

The Reporter was the first to reap the benefit of the "find." He wrote "stories" for all the papers and sold them at his own price. In less than a week plain M. La Fetra was "Count La Fetra," and was "traveling in America for his health." Only the rich "travel for their health." The rest of the world are simply "travelers," from the ordinary citizen down to the tramp.

What a change all this ado must have been to M. La Fetra, "the prospective heir to a vast French fortune." Tailors vied with each other in arraying him in their finest importations, and were only too delighted to have him open an account with them. Florists kept him supplied with their rarest flowers, and seemed almost offended when he spoke of pay. Ere long the carriages of society began stopping at our door, and Count La Fetra was the attraction of many a social event.

The Actor set about getting up what he called a theatre party for the "Count," and went so far as to engage a box and order a fine supper at "Del's." The only thing that prevented its success was that I refused to loan him the money "till next week." The worship of gold was always more devout with me when I could carry the idol in my own pocket.

Why prolong this story? It would be but a recital of the honors and courtesies thrust upon a stranger by people who had no interest whatever in the "man," but in what they thought the "man was to get."

The end came. M. La Fetra—"Count" no longer—got his "fortune." The dear old aunt had willed most of her wealth to the Church, and his portion amounted to just *thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents.*

CHAPTER XVI.

"The Bargain Day Fighting Battalion has much to do with the condition of things."

And there was the one they called the Anarchist. When the Statesman told me that this man was an anarchist I could scarcely comprehend it. My notion of an anarchist had been so entirely different from what I found this man to be. Tom was quiet, and even courteous. His language was cultured and his voice soft and gentle, and yet there was that earnestness about his manner that always commanded instant attention. He had been an editor in his own land, which he always spoke of as "The Land of the Midnight Sun." While he was yet a young man he had been banished from his country for some of his sentiments. Since coming to America he had spent much of his time in working for the betterment of the poorer classes. He had traveled extensively, had seen nearly all of our cities, and made a study of our customs, our laws and our people. "You think of me," said he one evening at table, "as an anarchist or as a socialist, and why am I so called? I look about me on the human race; I see that God has given to all equal natural rights, has given to all the desire to live. When I see the lesser portion bearing down upon the greater, by reason of the laws which they, with superior minds, have been able to make; when I see each year these laws being made more burdensome than before; when I see the poor being made poorer, and the rich more domineering; when I see men with aspirations to lead a better life ground down until they lose all hope and become thoroughly bad; when I see the faces of little children pinched and wan by reason of prenatal care of a starving mother; when I see these little children grow up amid surroundings that tend only to make them worse even than their parents; when, I say, I see all this awful condition, with a tendency to going continually lower, then I cry out in utter despair, and in my effort to change the conditions I am called an anarchist."

Just here the Statesman broke in with: "How would you change the existing conditions?"

Said the Anarchist, now becoming thoroughly wrought up with the subject: "I would have equitable laws—not one law for the rich and another for the poor. I would not have the money power continually changing the laws, governing finance, to their own advantage and to the detriment of labor, as you know they are doing, year after year. Money is being made too valuable for the capitalist, and labor and labor's product too cheap."

"We want things cheap," spoke up one of the lady boarders, one who, the Statesman said, was a regular "Bargain Day Hunter."

Whether the Anarchist meant it for her or as a general proposition, I do not know, but he said: "The bargain day fighting battalion has much to do with the condition of things. They buy only at unprofitable prices to the producer; the merchant must buy at a low price, and, in turn, the manufacturer must cut down his labor (it always ends at labor) that he may produce the article for this cheap 'counter.' This is becoming to be a bargain-hunting nation, which is not wise. Fair prices build up, while prices below living value degrade. 'I bought a 'bargain' to-day,' translated into human language means:

'I bought a few drops of the life's blood of a starving fellow-being.'

"If you could see what I am at times compelled to look upon you would not be surprised at these sentiments."

"Oh, there are too many Dagos coming to this country," said the Statesman, who is thoroughly American. "We can't help it if they have to work for low wages and live on a crust in a hovel. Why, for that matter, they were so used to low wages and hovel living in their own land that they would not know what to do if we changed their condition."

"My friends," replied the Anarchist, earnestly, "I had hoped not to speak of what I have seen this day, but when 'America' is mentioned I cannot keep back the story."

CHAPTER XVII.

"The flying wheels of the great factory were stilled, and the grass grew in the streets where once trod the contented workers.

"You know that my work is among the poor of the East Side. They all seem to know me over there. The little children are never too much taken up with their play not to notice when I come among them. About a year ago I noticed a bright little girl for the first time. The other children told me that she, with her mother, had just moved into the neighborhood. She was soon one of my friends, and was always glad to see Tom, as they all call me. They had rooms, plain but neatly furnished, and kept them so clean that they seemed out of place amid the surroundings. I learned, from time to time, bits of the mother's story, until I must have had it all. The record of her family began at the very beginning of your country as a nation. Her great great grandfather was a captain in the War of Independence, and her grandfather was with Perry on Lake Erie in the War of 1812. Following the record of the family, her father went with Scott to Mexico, and, when the Civil War broke out, he was chosen and went as colonel of a Massachusetts regiment. For each point of this record she had conclusive proof to show. She married a young man in her home village, which was supported entirely by a great manufacturing company. This company shortly after closed its doors, having been absorbed by a trust specially protected by your laws. This trust had millions of capital and could dictate what it wanted your law-makers to pass for its particular benefit. If perchance these laws were not entirely favorable to its interest, an opinion could be purchased, as one would purchase anything else in open market, for money will buy all things in your land, from the raw material up to an opinion that will sap the very life's blood of your working people. The flying wheels of this great factory were stilled, and the grass grew in the streets where once trod the contented workers. There was nothing to do in this pretty little village, with its schools and churches. This once prosperous community must seek its bread elsewhere—must seek its life in some other already overcrowded town or city, and by competition make the loaf ever smaller. And why? In order that, by concentration, capital might produce a fraction of a per cent. more for the lesser portion of your people. Not that this lesser portion needs the fraction, but your laws make it possible for the fraction to be taken, no matter if the bread of the greater part is taken to make up this increase of the small per cent.

"No work for the young husband in the home of his childhood, where every tree and plant had for him a sacred memory, he must find elsewhere a support for himself and his young wife. They removed to New York. For a time the husband found work and the wife took in sewing that she might eke out the necessities of their new home. Edith came, but she did not bring that joy with her that is seen in the home of the rich, for her arrival meant another life to support. The condition of the very poor seldom grows better. The husband, who, at the old home, had been a temperance worker, took to drink, as he said, to drown his troubles, and died, a low drunkard, when Edith was scarce two years old. The struggle for bread was now an earnest one for the young mother. As long as she could get steady work to do at the factory, and with what sewing she could do at night, she made out to live fairly well, but of late I had seen Edith very seldom. Each time her sweet little face, so bright and cheery when I had first seen it, seemed more wan and pinched. Did you ever watch a rose, see it bud and bloom and fade? Edith of late had faded fast. I had missed her from among her playmates for several of my late visits. To-day I asked: 'Where is Edith?'

" 'Oh, don't you know, Tom, that Edith is very sick?' asked one of the little girls. 'My mamma was there this morning, and she says that Edith cannot live at all. Did you know that they had moved? Yes, Tom, the man that owns the factory made them get out yesterday. He was awful mean. He said he couldn't keep paupers. Tom, Edith wasn't a pauper, was she? Why, all of her grand-papas were soldiers, and made this country free, my mamma says. How could she be a pauper, when that factory man, who only came when the country was free, is so rich? My mamma says when that man came he only had a pack on his back; now he makes everybody work nearly for nothing and fines them if they are a minute late, and makes lots of money. Edith's mamma worked for him a long time, and when he turned her off she couldn't pay her rent any more, and then he turned her out, and she went to live away upstairs in the next house, in a little room what another very poor woman lets her live in for nothing. Tom, my mamma says Edith was awful sick this morning; she cried real hard and said: 'I want Tom. He is the only man who is kind to us, mamma. Everybody is so wicked but Tom. Tell him to come. I want to see him before I go.' You must go to see her, won't you, dear Tom?'

"I needed no urging after that. The little girl led me up a dark, rickety stairway to the very garret of an old house, and there, on some rags, lay the grandchild of a long line of soldiers, dying, starving, in a country her ancestors had made free, enlarged, saved and always defended. If the rich man—made rich by legal robbery—could have seen that sight, I know that his riches would not have had for him their glitter or their wonted value.

" 'Oh, Tom, I am so glad you have come. I was afraid I would have to go without seeing you.' She could say but a few words at a time. She was but the shadow of the Edith I had seen a year ago. She was sinking fast when I reached her. I shall never forget the end. 'Mamma, I am so hungry. Will I be hungry in heaven? Will God give all the bread to the rich factory man and let us starve? Will the rich sit in the great hotels there, listening to the sweet music, with so much to eat that they will never be hungry, while we look in at the window, without a crust? Will God love the factory man there and give everything to him and nothing to us?' She grows delirious; her gaze seems far away, and upward, as she continues: 'Mamma, listen. Do you hear the drums beating? See, there's a long line of soldiers, dressed up so queer—more and more of them coming. There, mamma, watch; they are fighting. A big man leads a company. See, quick—he drives back the other soldiers, who have red coats on. There, the great general is thanking him, and everybody is throwing up hats. Mamma, look at the big ships on the water. Oh, how the cannons roar! See, the masts are flying in splinters. There—one of them is sinking. A great man is on it. Oh, mamma, his ship will sink with him—no—there's a boat—oh, look quick, one of the men in the boat looks like the picture of grandpa. Now, see, he is going with the great man to another ship. There, see, mamma, some of the ships are running away and the great man is following them. They stop. There is no fighting now. They are all going away together, and the great man is in the front ship. Our flag is the only one flying; all the others are pulled down. Mamma, why don't I see any rich factory man fighting? Oh, look; here's fighting on the land again. See the awful hill those soldiers are climbing up—and there, mamma, there's grandpa on top of the hill, waving a flag, and a lot of queer little soldiers running away. Won't the fighting ever stop, mamma? Grandpa is fighting again. He is older now, and has pretty clothes on, and with, oh, so many soldiers behind him. Ah, I am so glad it is all over now—no more shooting. Listen! There is more music, but there is no drum.' We thought that she was gone, but in a few moments her eyes opened wide and her face shone with a radiance I had never before seen, and, with her little hands extended, she feebly cried: 'Yes, grandpa, here is your little Edith. She is so tired—so tired.'

"And yet, my friends, I am called an Anarchist." We silently left the table, no one caring to speak.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Thirty days! Next!"

I think it was the second day after I had found the boarding place when Tom, the "Anarchist," for whom I had taken a great liking, came to me just after breakfast and said he would help me to hunt for my friend Bill.

I was glad to have him go out with me, as, when I went alone on the street, even the small boys said things to me and followed me about just as though I had been the elephant in a circus procession.

I never could have believed that there were so many different kinds of people in the world as we saw that morning.

We went down to where I had found so many of the newspaper offices the day I put in the advertisements, and just stood there and watched the people go by, for all the world like bees in white clover season.

Nobody seemed to be going anywhere, yet they all kept moving, except some very tired-looking men, who sat on the benches in the little park.

I asked Tom what so many fat soldiers were doing in town that day, but he said: "Why, they are not soldiers. They are policemen."

I watched them with great interest. They didn't seem to have a thing in the world to do but to whirl a stick which they had tied to their wrists with strings, and to eat apples and peanuts from little wagons that stood along the road. When they would get tired eating, they would scold at the man who pushed the wagon for them, and make him move to the other side of the road, where another policeman stood whirling his club and waiting for him to come.

Tom pointed out to me a dark, fierce-looking man, who, he said, had been a bandit before he came here from Italy.

I had often read of those desperate men and felt like moving off from where we stood, as he came over from the other side of the way, not that I was at all afraid of him, but, then, I just felt that it would be safer to be on the further side of the little park, but Tom said that there was no immediate danger, so we remained.

He had scarcely located his little wagon of fruit when a policeman, who seemed to be expecting him, reached down and took the largest apple off the pile. I trembled for that officer, for I knew there would be trouble—and there was—but not for the policeman. Instantly he had taken the fruit the ex-bandit said, fierce-like, as he straightened up to his full height: "Noa taka da Ap!" That policeman, who had before seemed so lacking in animation, was instantly a whirlwind of action. He rained blows on the bandit's head and was soon leading him off to the station.

The wagon was overturned and the small boys gathered up the apples and were making off with them, while other policemen looked on smiling.

Tom and I followed the brave officer and the desperate bandit, to see what was to be done with him—the bandit.

He was taken before the judge, who wanted to know, "What is the charge?" Rough like, "Mea maka no charge, judge. He noa aska de price. He just taka da ap!" said the now thoroughly excited bandit.

"Keep still! Officer, what is the charge?"

"Disarderly konduct and rezisting ahn afficer ov the lah, yerronner!"

The judge looked at the battered up Italian and came to the same conclusion that I had reached, that it would take him at least a month to get over his bruises, so he said:

"Thirty days! Next!"

I was greatly surprised when Tom told me that the judge had sent the bandit to prison for a month.

"What for?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Tom; "but that is the way the law is administered here, if the prisoner be a poor devil."

I couldn't help thinking that the Italian had better remained at home and kept at his banditing rather than to have come over here to be civilized, where other foreigners do the civilizing with a club.

CHAPTER XIX.

"For real, downright, frugal politics, commend me to your country districts."

"Why do the citizens allow their affairs to be run in this manner?" I asked that evening, as Tom and I sat in his room, after dinner.

"Ruben," said he, "the citizens have very little to do with the matter of running a city. The politicians look after it for them. But of this I will some time tell you."

"I am sure," said I, not wishing to drop the subject so abruptly, "that our country districts have a greater care about their affairs than to allow the politicians to manage them as they are run in the cities."

"Ah, Ruben, I see that you know nothing about how your own native land is governed. Why, my dear boy, for real, downright, frugal politics commend me to these same country districts.

"Years ago, when there was not so much enlightenment as now, your counties had but little use for law. Your people were happy and lived in peaceful quiet. Your county officers were usually men who had their own affairs to look after, and were paid a nominal salary by the public. But how do you find it at the present? New offices have been created and the salaries of the office-holders have grown in proportion as the prices of the land and its products have fallen. Offices which were once but a name are now held by men who, though they could make but a poor living outside, are growing rich at the expense of your patient farmers. Some country lawyer, who finds existence a serious problem, will get himself sent as a representative or Assemblyman to your law-making halls, and there, by a series of 'log-rolling,' will have the salary of some county office raised, or, for that matter, have a new office created, and at the end of his term come home and get himself elected to that office.

"He will thereafter be known as 'Honorable,' a word more often *dis*honored by the holder than any other in the English language.

"I have in mind, Ruben, a certain county whose politicians, led by one of the above-mentioned 'Honorables,' have reached such a degree of perfection that, if it were not so serious, it would be a most humorous subject for a comic play, or even opera bouffe.

"If I were gifted in that line I would be tempted to write such a play.

"Just think of the various acts that could be worked in! not least among which would be the law that the county 'Honorable' had 'log-rolled' through, where all 'knights of the road' were to be arrested by the constables, taken before the justice of the peace, who must in turn commit them to the county jail, where the sheriff boards them at a big profit to himself. The 'knights' from all surrounding counties—(less charitable to both knights and their office-holders)—know of this, and when cold weather sets in come in to be 'arrested,' get their winter's board free, and go out in the spring in fine condition. The poor little county pays all expenses and the office-holders become the 'wealthy men' of the district.

"Here would be some of the acts and scenes that could be put into such a play:

"The caucus of leaders; the primary for nominations;

the patriotic speeches before election, in which the gifted orators could draw pictures of how the country would be ruined if Sam Wiggins were not elected as constable, instead of Phil Jinkins; or the scene in the cross-roads grocery store, where the adherents of different factions fight over the fine points of their several candidates; and then, after the election returns are all in and the country is 'saved' or 'ruined' (to be determined from which side you view it), the successful candidates meet to arrange their plan of attack on the public treasury."

"Hurray! hurray! Go on, Tom. I'll be the 'congregation.'" I was getting enthusiastic as he laid out the plot.

"Act 2, Scene 1, we will place in the sheriff's office. This high official calls the roll and finds all present. He being the dean of the officers, takes the chair and gives instructions to the newly elected. He addresses those having supervision: 'Here, men, start work at once in every section of the county, that you may put in as many days this year as possible. Place as few men on each bridge or road as can well be, that the time may be extended for the completion of the work, lest it cost the people too small a sum. Go at once and lose no time, as winter will soon be upon you.' Exit those having supervision.

"Sheriff continues: 'Here, Keeper of the Keys! Where is that dolt? Ah, there you are. How many boarders have we in the Safe?'

"Keeper: 'Ten, me lord!'

"Sheriff: 'Ten! Only ten, and winter so nearly upon us! Where are my Procurers of the Road Knights? Send them in!'

"Enter six Procurers trembling.

"Sheriff: 'You villains, why this emptiness?'

"Spokesman for Procurers: ''Tis the heat, me lord!

The Knights refuse to come into the county until the winter hath set in cold. We have abundant promise from them that when the snow doth fly that they will come into the county. So many promises have we, me lord, methinks you must needs enlarge the Safe.'

"The Sheriff, in fine humor, bids them depart, each to his county, to work up the winter business. Exit Procurers. Sheriff gives instructions to the assembled Constables, Justices of the Peace and other officers, and the curtain is rung down.

* * * * * * * *

"The Constables have given up their trades or other occupations for the more lucrative one of holding office, and have purchased each a horse and carriage—on time; the Justices have each fitted up an office; the Sheriff has had partitions put into the larger rooms of his 'Safe,' and all are ready for the next scene.

"Act 2, Scene 2. Same as preceding. Sheriff's office. Fine, old-fashioned fire-place piled full of burning wood; table in centre, on which are seen boxes of cigars and bottles. Wind blowing a gale outside, with snow beating against the window.

"Enter Keeper of the Keys, left centre.

"Keeper: 'Sam Wiggins is at the door, me lord, with a carriageload of Knights.'

"Sheriff: 'Bid him enter.'

"Enter Sam Wiggins: 'Cold night, me lord, to be abroad.'

"Sheriff: 'From whence the load of Knights, Sam?'

"Sam: 'From the very edge of the county, me lord! These Knights do grow full proud and refuse to walk. We must needs drive for them!'

"Sheriff: 'Wherefore and why this complaint, when the county pays the mileage? What is the number?'

"Sam: 'Six, and lusty fellows they are, all from the adjoining county, where there is much wood to saw, but no friendly welcome, and no generous keep as in our own hospitable borders.'

"Sheriff: 'The hour grows late, Sam. Away, and to the Justice, that you may have them committed before the stroke of twelve, that I may date their arrival from this day.'

"Sam lingers, as his eye falls upon the bottles on the table.

"Sam: ''Tis a cold night, me lord.' (Shivering.)

"Sheriff: 'Yes, Sam, but the night is passing swift!'

"Sam: ''Tis a passing cold night, me lord!' Backs toward the table.

"Sheriff: 'Will you be off?' (Rises and goes to the window.)

"Sam (who now stands with his back to the table): 'Yes, me lord, but me spirits run low and I would take with me some of the fire that burns so cheery.'

"Sheriff: 'Fill full your pockets with the fire and begone.' (Still looking out of the window, while Sam puts into the pocket of his great coat two of the bottles.)

"Sam: 'Yes, me lord!' Exit.

"Scene 3. An hour later. But, Ruben, as this is not a very nice 'scene,' I will leave it out. Sam has returned with two very empty bottles, but with six lusty Knights in quite the other condition.

"The subsequent scenes of the play would be much of a repetition of the foregoing. In them you would note the Sheriff's 'Safe,' very much crowded, but you would see few changes, as when a 'boarder' would be discharged he would simply needs go down to see Sam Wiggins, who would forthwith 'rearrest' him, take him before the Justice, who, as was his duty, would commit him for another term, and so would run the play till spring.

"You would see Sam a much better-dresed man, and he might tell you that he had already paid for his horse and carriage, as each arrest means a fee and mileage for 'carriage hire,' patient farmers paying all bills. Sam might, however, not deign to notice you, as he is now a man of much importance.

"When the end of the year had come around, you might see gathered the same county officers—very much improved in appearance since doffing the old and putting on the new suits given them by the tailor who had gotten the contract at a paying figure for clothing the 'county poor.'

"If you would come to watch this scene you would see again me lord, the high Sheriff, several thousand dollars richer and correspondingly prominent. When you had listened to the report of the Treasurer and heard the Sheriff commend those who had had supervision of the county, you would conclude that they had followed his instructions to the letter, but you would no doubt wonder where, in one poor little county, they had found so many roads and bridges to look after.

"If you should want to know how well these officers had succeeded in spending the money of the hard-working farmers, all you need do would be to compare the reports with other counties, and you would note a vast difference in the expenditures."

"But, Tom, what sort of people are those of this county who would allow their affairs to be so conducted?" I asked in wonderment.

"Oh, they are a fine enough people, but their politicians have worked so smoothly along for years that they really believe that the country would go to ruin if they did not send these same men right back into office, simply because they belong to 'our party,' and 'our party' is always the 'patriotic party,' managed and run by patriots—'for revenue only.'

"Oh, yes, Ruben, for real, downright, frugal politics commend me to your country districts."

CHAPTER XX.

"Sometimes everybody would sing. I joined in once, and was thinking what a beautiful voice I had, when the man at my side stopped short and looked at me. At that moment I heard myself, and didn't blame him. I stopped, too."

One Sunday, shortly after reaching the city, I went to church. I had never dreamed that a church could be so fine. It far surpassed my conception of Solomon's Temple. Everything was so new and strange to me.

I had always loved music, but I felt that day that I had never before heard music. The whole end of the house was filled with gold and silver pipes which reached nearly to the ceiling, while a man sat in front of them and played on an organ. It looked like a very small instrument, but, oh. the music that player could get out of it!

Four people did the singing. One would sing until he was tired, then another and another would start in and help him. Sometimes they would all four sing at once; then it seemed that the whole house was full of music.

My mind ran back to the little corner in the "meeting house" at Highmont, where old "Uncle" Brunner used to lead the singing. He would often try to carry all parts at once, but it was a failure, as he would invariably run out of breath on the high notes; but he would keep right on, although you could only tell that he was singing by sight —your own.

Toward the last some of the young people felt it their duty to help him to lead, but he could never be induced to accept their assistance. He thought it was an innovation, and said: "For forty year hev I dun ther leadin', and I'll keep it up to ther end!" And he did. He was a good old man, and we all loved him. But, then, I was telling about the music in this great city church.

Sometimes everybody would sing. I joined in once, and was thinking what a beautiful voice I had, when the man at my side stopped short and looked at me. At that moment I heard myself, and didn't blame him. I stopped, too.

It must have been missionary Sunday. The minister preached the most eloquent sermon I had ever heard. He drew a picture of the benighted condition of the heathen in foreign climes, and told how it was the duty of every one present to give their money if they could not go themselves to alleviate the sad condition of their less fortunate brothers and sisters in distant lands.

I noticed how he dwelt on the "distant." Several times I thought of the Bowery, and wondered how far distant they would have to go to find a riper field for work.

His sermon was most affecting. Many ladies wept, and the way the men threw in their money, I was sure they were touched, too.

I stayed around in the back part of the church after the sermon. I wanted to get acquainted. I knew that these people would be anxious to gather in strangers. I knew if they could weep over some poor heathen whom they had never seen and only knew in the abstract, that they would welcome me, who had come in without any effort or tears on their part; but they didn't. None of them even noticed me, and when I spoke to one good man whom I had seen thrown into the plate a large bill of money, he looked at me and said:

"Well, what is it!" in a cold wave-like tone that froze me as solid as though it had come from "Greenland's Icy Mountains."

I came away thinking that New York congregations preferred saving the "fig-leaf" variety of heathen, and even them at long range.

When I told my experience at the dinner table our Heathen smiled and said I would learn more the longer I stayed in New York.

"I was a member of church myself when I came here," said he, "but I got frozen out. I was reared in the country, where not to go to church was to be looked upon as very wicked indeed.

"At home I knew everybody, and had become so used to cordial greeting on 'preaching day' that when I came to the city I looked for something of the same spirit of welcome. But, oh, the change! Sunday after Sunday I went religiously. I even took a Sunday-school class of children, thinking that in time the frost might thaw out of the hearts of the good people, but it never did. There was that cold formality found in no other body of people in the world. I used often to wonder what would happen to the old fishermen and net-makers of nineteen centuries ago should they chance to drop in to listen to the texts of which they were the origin. I could, in mind, see the fashionable usher pompously telling them that there was a little chapel away off on some side street built and maintained for such as them—chapels built and maintained by the fashionable rich, who no doubt look forward to a reward for the building.

"After many months I gave up my class and stopped going to church entirely. It has been years since I was inside of one.

"I find that the cities are full of young men who have had the same experience as mine, and yet the freezing goes right on.

"The churches of the cities ever gain form, but lose in that cordiality that will draw to them new life.

"As you have seen to-day, Ruben, great interest is manifested in the heathen of 'distant lands.' If this same interest were shown in trying to hold young men who find their way into the churches, far more good would be done and the congregations not so lacking in men.

"How could a change be made? you ask. Nothing easier. There should be in every congregation a committee of welcome, whose duty it would be to see, as far as possible, that no stranger came and went without carrying in his heart a desire to come again.

"This committee would be of far more real worth to the upbuilding of a church than all the money of the millionaire membership, who often, though correct in every form, are as lacking in true worship as an iceberg of warmth."

"Do you mean that every one who came should be made welcome?" asked the prim boarder, the old lady with the curls, over there at the side table. "How would we know who they were. We might not want them in our church society. They might not be proper people."

"My dear lady," replied the Heathen, with a question: "Does it follow, then, that none but the 'proper' are to be received? What did the net-maker know of such when he preached to all? But that was long ago, before the days of the 'proper.'

"In my country home, the poor old widow who lives in the cabin on the mountain side sits beside the best people in our community, who, in their simple worship, never ask if it is the 'correct form.'"

"What church did you attend, Ruben?" some one asked.

"I don't know the name of it," said I, "but it is that one, you know, that has the undertaker's sign out on the front." There was nothing humorous in my answer, yet everybody about the table laughed.

CHAPTER XXI.

"She smoothed my cheek with her chubby little hands, and said in the sweetest child voice I had ever heard, 'Oh, poor mister, are you hurted much? I is so sorry I run'd across the street.'"

One afternoon, while I was taking my usual walk on Fifth avenue, always looking for Bill, I watched the crowds of people driving, walking or talking together on the sidewalk. Suddenly there was a great commotion two or three blocks away. I looked in the direction and was horrified to see a horse hitched to a grocer's wagon "running off." He was coming right toward where I was standing, coming, as we used to say, "like the wind." Everybody ran for the housesteps, while the carriages in the road gave him a wide berth.

I don't know how it happened, but it must have been the natural perversity of young children that caused a beautiful little girl to start to run across the street almost in front of the "runaway." Women screamed, while the men stood as though they were paralyzed. I never get scared until after the danger is past. At the time I need my senses I usually have them about me.

I ran out from the sidewalk and with a quick rush got the child beyond the wheel line, but was less fortunate myself, as one of my long legs got in the way and was broken just below the knee. I tried to get up; then I found what had happened to me. When I saw that the little girl was safe I didn't mind my own hurt, especially when she smoothed my cheek with her chubby little hands and said in the sweetest child voice I had ever heard: "Oh, poor mister, are you hurted? I is so sorry I run'd across the street."

By this time I was surrounded by a dense mass of people. All they did was to shut out the air, which I needed more than I needed their interest.

Long before the wagon from the hospital came for me as many as six different men gave me their cards or the cards of some friend. Every one was "the best lawyer in New York city," and "made a specialty of just such cases."

I was afraid I was getting "out of my head." What were these men talking about lawyers for? I needed a doctor, not a lawyer, so I asked: "What has a lawyer to do with me? He can't fix my leg."

"No, no. We don't mean that. You have met with an accident; careless driver; very rich grocer owns the wagon. Sue him and get big damages. Won't cost you a cent. We'll collect and give you half."

And this was New York city! "Leeches, parasites," I cried, in anger, "do you suppose I could take money from a man who has the misfortune of having a careless driver? a man who would not intentionally hurt me for anything? Away; get me a doctor," for my leg was beginning to pain after the numbing shock had worn off.

The wagon, with a big, clanging bell, came, and with it two very young doctors.

They examined my leg and thought it was broken, after much unnecessary twisting. They were not real certain, but were pretty sure that it was.

For my part I was quite certain; but, then, I was not a young doctor.

They took me to a fine hospital just west of the avenue, carried me upstairs by means of a little movable room called an elevator, and laid me on one of a long row of pretty little white cots.

The doctors, when they learned how it had occurred, treated me very kindly, and in a short time had my leg set, and left me feeling quite comfortable.

It could not have been two hours after the accident when a young man came hurriedly into the big room and asked: "Where is he? Where is he?" And when I was pointed out by the nurse, he came with extended hand and with such a cordial smile that I quite forgot the pain for the moment.

"My dear friend," as I must call you, "we owe you a thousand thanks. It was my little sister whose life you saved at the risk of your own." Then turning to the doctor who was with him: "Come, place this young man in the best room you have in the hospital, and spare nothing for his comfort.

"I cannot express what we feel toward you. Helen would surely have been killed had you not risked your life for her. If you but knew the bright little sunbeam that she is, you could then know the full weight of gratitude we owe to you. But I will not talk too long now. I will come again to-morrow.

"Is there any message you would have me send to your family?"

"No," said I, "my family must not know of my accident. It would terribly frighten them and would do no good. I would, however, like if you would write to my landlady."

The nurse went for paper and pen, and I told him to send the following note:

"My Dear Madam: I am very sorry, but I find I will be compelled to change my boarding place for a while; not that I am displeased with your house, but circumstances cause this change.

"Kindly take care of my carpet-sack and my umbrella."

The young man smiled and said: "The landlady will think you are spending a few days with the 'captain of the precinct.'"

The Statesman told me, when I got well, that that was what they did think, especially the Heathen, who said:

"I am not surprised. I thought he was that kind!" But when they saw it in the papers, written up foolish like, just as though I was a real hero, even the Heathen remarked:

"Well, you can't always tell!"

As the young man left me he gave me his card:

EDWARD S. DEHERTBERN,
—— Fifth Avenue.

"We will soon have you out again," and went, as he came, with a smile.

I had never met so fine a young man as he. Tall, yet so well proportioned that his six feet two stature seemed just right. He had brown hair and eyes and a ruddy color that indicated great vigor.

The room into which I was removed was large, scrupulously clean and with just the necessary furnishings. Nothing whatever of a gloomy character, as one never having been inside of a hospital would expect, from the nature of the place, to find.

And the nurse. Well, I am not going to describe her further than to say that she was the kind of which they make angels. She all but made me forget that I was hurt, and to almost hope that mine would be a lingering case. It was not what she said, for she spoke very little, but the kind, gentle manner in which she did everything, from the smoothing out of a pillow to administering the drops to keep down my fever. I could not but feel that of all noble callings in the world none could compare with that of the nurse. She gives up home and all pleasures; casts behind her everything dear to the heart of woman, and devotes her life to the ills and sufferings of her fellow-beings.

Here was I, a great, awkward young man, with no culture or city polish, and knew very little aside from what I had learned in the far-removed community of the mountain, where to gain the bare necessities of physical life was the chief aim of existence, and yet this woman was treating me as gently as though I had been a king.

It is the humanity and not the man to which they minister.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Oh, the kiss of a child! How it thrills!" said I.
"Yes," said Edward; "and the older the child the greater
the thrill, especially if a girl child!"

It was with great pleasure that I looked forward next day to Edward's promised visit.

The pleasure of his coming was even greater than I had hoped for, as he brought Helen with him.

"She would come with me," said Edward.

"Yes, dear Mister Ruben; and see the flowers I bringed you. Mamma says if I am very, very good I may come often. Do you want me to come often, Mister Ruben? I won't be in the way. Tousin Wallie always says he likes to have me come to see him."

"There, there, Helen, you must not talk so much. You will tire Ruben, and he will not want you to come any more." Then to me Edward turned and said: "She is a great pet at the office, where I often take her. 'Tousin Wallie,' as she calls him, is one of the young men in the office, who always 'makes' over her a good deal."

I just couldn't help saying. "You little angel, you can never, never come too often to please me."

"I ain't a angel, Mister Ruben, but mamma says if it hadn't been for you I would be one by now, though. Say, Mister Ruben, can angels come back when they go away? I wouldn't want to go away ever if I couldn't come back to see mamma and papa, and Beatrice and Edward, and—

oh, yes, Tousin Wallie, too. Would you, Mister Ruben? Now stop, brother Edward. Mamma said I might talk to Mister Ruben a little bit of a bit," and she prattled on in her sweet, childish way till I was wild with joy, for I am never happier than I am with children around me.

"Have you any little girls at your house, Mister Ruben? What's their name? Have they pretty dollies like I have? How do they play? Do they always have to be dressed? Does their nurse always say 'don't, 'don't'?"

I told her that I had two sweet little sisters, Pauline and Eveline May, who were near her age.

"Helen," said I, "they do not always have to be 'dressed up,' but can put on dresses they do not have to be careful of, and can play in a beautiful little brook that runs near the house. They can make mud pies and can even go 'barefoot' in warm weather. They have real rag dolls, and are so happy with them. They have little cousins to play with, and two very big black dogs, Carlo and Brutus, who play ball with them. The children throw the ball and the big dogs run, oh, so fast, to get it and bring it back, and almost ask to have it thrown again. The children can hitch Carlo and Brutus to a little wagon and ride to the village store for candy. And Helen, their nurse, never says 'Don't!' for they have no nurse."

"Oh, Mister Ruben, do they live in heaven? That sounds just like it! I never, never can do anything like that. I always must be dressed up, and nurse is al'ays saying 'Don't! Don't!'—I never can do anything I want, like Pauline and Eveline May. I want a rag doll, brother Edward, and a brook to play in, and old clothes, and cousins, and big black dogs like Carlo and Brutus. I don't like mean little city dogs, for they won't do a thing but sit around."

"Yes, yes, Helen. We must not stay too long. The nurse said that Ruben should not talk too much."

"He don't have to talk too much. I won't let him. Do I, Mister Ruben? Now we are going, but I will come back again ever single time mamma will let me. Say, mister, may I kiss you good-by? Sister Beatrice says only the little wee girls may kiss the big young men, but I saw her kiss Tousin Wallie one day, and she is a way, way big girl—so big." And her little hands were held away up.

"Oh, the kiss of a child! How it thrills!" said I.

"Yes," said Edward. "And the older the child the greater the thrill, especially if a girl child!" He was so cheery that day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"You know, Ruben, the country widow is gregarious, and seldom travels except in pairs."

As Helen talked of her Tousin Wallie, I could not but think of my Bill. What had become of him? Would I ever find him in this great city, which seemed greater every time I went out and found new parts of it?

When I wrote home for his address, his mother was away. She had gone to the West somewhere and would not return for months.

Sister Anna attended to the letter writing for the family. "Ruben," she wrote, "we all think that you had better come home at once, if you do not find Bill, as we are so afraid you will get lost.

"You did not write for so long after you reached New York, and besides, your letter was delayed somewhere, that it was nearly three weeks before we heard from you.

"You may think the condition of the family mind was in by the time we did hear!

"What made matters worse, all the old maiden ladies and lone widows for miles around Highmont came to see mother, 'to cheer her up,' as they said, and then stayed to tell her about young men who had gone to that great, wicked city and had never been heard of again. Then, when they were ready to go, and had said 'good-by' so many times that I had quite forgot what the word meant, they would begin all over again. They would 'settle' down and say: 'But then, Mary, you must not give up hope. Ruben may not be real bright, yet he will find his way.'

"If there were more than one—and you know, Ruben, the country widow is gregarious and seldom travels except in pairs—they would sit out the afternoon, starting in with you as 'the lost boy' and ending up with how their own dear companions had 'suffered toward the last,' each one trying to outdo the other in the graphic recital.

"Oh, Ruben, that was a cheerful time, I assure you! But I never want them to think of you as 'lost' again.

"If you do get lost, don't say a word about it, as I never want the old maiden ladies and lone widows to hear of it. They might again come to 'cheer us up.'

"The only thing that could stop the doleful recital when they once got fairly under way was for some 'old maid' to say that a 'certain widower' had called to see her 'Sunday night.' At that the 'dearly departed' ailments and all were forgotten and merged into the one subject, for the moment, 'that certain widower.'

"You say, Ruben, that New York is so large that you can stand at one end and cannot see the other! You do not mean to tell me that there are houses all the way, do you?

"You had better come home at once, Ruben. Oh, if anything should happen to you, or you should get sick! I don't dare let my mind dwell on it."

And this was the situation when the "anything happened" to me. Fortunately, I had written the morning of the accident and said that I had a number of good friends who had promised to see that I did not get "lost."

I did not need to write until I had a reply to my letter, when, by that time, I hoped to be able to write, if but a few lines, and keep them from being unnecessarily worried about me.

I did not think it wise, in any event, to tell of my accident, as, should the old maiden ladies or lone widows hear of it, they would go in delegations to tell mother of cases they knew about where the patient had died of measles, all from a broken leg. No, I would write very short but very cheerful letters for a while.

What with Helen's daily bouquet of flowers and the choice fruits with which Edward kept me so well supplied, I felt I was indeed a favored invalid.

Helen had kept her word. She did come "every single time mamma would let her,' which was never to often for me.

Her bright sayings and sweet ways quite endeared her to the nurse and the doctors, especially to Dr. Neill, a jolly, bald-headed bachelor. He would often say: "Helen, you are my little girl, ain't you?"

She was very playful with him and enjoyed his romps with her.

One day he was "mussing" her hair, when she said:

"Doctor, don't muss my hair. Nurse will scold if I get 'rats' in it!"

"Helen," said he, "you know you said you were my little girl. If you are my little girl, your hair is mine, too."

"Well, doctor, if it is yours, you better cut it off and put it on, and then you wouldn't be bald-headed."

The doctor never "mussed her hair" again after that.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"A thousand years, more or less, to a mummy is of little matter—to the mummy."

When the nurse allowed me to read a little each day I quite prized the books that Edward brought me from his library, and none of them more than the books of travel.

When he saw that I was interested in other countries, he said that we were kindred spirits.

He was interested in reading about them, but far more so in visiting them.

When I found he had traveled in many of the lands about which I had read, I soon had him telling me of his wanderings. You know there is nothing that will so please a traveled man as to listen to his story.

"Ruben, of all the countries about which you have read, which one interests you the most?" asked Edward one day, when I could see that he was in a reminiscent mood.

"They all interest me," said I. "Some of them for one reason, some for another. I like Egypt because of its strange unraveling history. We know so little about it, but are ever learning more. New 'birds' tell some strange old story each year. They tell us of a civilization so far in the past that we wonder at our not being further ahead now.

"I never could understand why the world should have gone backward, with all the knowledge it once had. It was as though we should now deliberately break our watches and time pieces of all kinds, and eat and sleep by the sun dial, and yet that was what the nations all seem to have done after Egypt's brilliant sun of civilization had gone down. They groped in darkness a long while before even a little ray of dawn shot up again."

"It is very odd, Ruben, that you should speak of Egypt. And from merely reading of it form almost the same opinions of it that I have formed by much travel in that strange country.

"When I stood in the presence of those vast pyramids, looked upon the silent Sphinx, visited the great temples built to gods of stone, or groped my way through the rock-hewn tombs, deep in the earth, the awe in which I held the ancient builders of all these giant works was greater than I have felt in any other land.

"What makes the feeling deeper, is to look upon these enduring piles of stone, and then see around one the children of the builders—a race so degenerate, that one's most acute imagination cannot even dimly see the face of the sire in the offspring.

"I spent four months last year in Egypt, and was fortunate in having as a companion Prof. Blake, a rising young Egyptologist.

"It was like going through college with a 'pony.' I had all the pleasure of knowing, without the labor of study.

"The professor could read the inscriptions of birds and figures, cut into the stone, as you would read a book.

"He was so bright and genial that those months seem now as a pleasant dream."

I asked if Egypt was not a very hot and dusty country, and if he did not at times grow tired of seeing nothing but ruins, and black people who cared only for the money they could beg, my notion of them being that they were a race of beggars.

"Oh, no," said he, "there are always many tourists in Egypt, and they are not long in attaching themselves to one who can read the hieroglyphics for them.

"The Professor always had people around him, so that we were never, or seldom, alone."

This opened up the way for a new line of conversation. I could see his face light up and he began as though to tell a story.

"I shall never forget," said he, "one of our excursions. A new tomb had just been discovered some miles up the Nile from Memphis. We were among the first to visit it.

"We left the small steamer at early dawn. There were on the boat, besides ourselves and our guides, a gentleman and two ladies, with their guides.

"We had spoken casually to the gentleman, but had not seen the ladies. We told him that we were going to the newly-discovered tomb, and always glad of company, were pleased to learn that their destination was the same.

"Just before leaving the steamer the two ladies, heavily veiled (the sun is so hot that ladies, to protect their faces, must go veiled), came on deck and joined the gentlemen.

"We saw but little of them until we reached the tomb; but, Ruben, do you know that all the way I continually found myself wondering about those ladies. 'What do they look like?' 'Are they the typical women tourists—as uninteresting in face as they are bright in mind?' 'Are they old or young?' were some of my mental questions. What I had noticed as they walked across the deck was that one of them had the most graceful figure and carriage I had ever seen. She was rather tall and bore herself like a queen.

"I knew by the gentleman that they were of aristocratic birth.

"One gets in the way, while traveling, of trying to analyze the nationality of the people one meets, but I was at a loss to determine the nationality of the only one of this party I could see. In some ways he seemed to be English, and yet again there were mannerisms that were purely American. He was below middle life, tall, and had the air of a soldier. I knew by his manner of speaking to his guides that he was used to giving commands.

"No doubt had I seen the faces of the ladies as they came on deck I would not have given them a second thought, as I seldom am attracted by a face, unless there is something very striking in it. But those veils! 'What was behind them?' And so my mind ran on, all the way to the tomb, which we reached not far from the middle of the day.

"Being more used to 'donkey train' than their party—who, we noticed, were not desirous of joining us—we were possibly an hour ahead of them.

"This particular tomb was much like others we had explored. Great heaps of fresh sand lay all about the mouth of the excavation, showing that the work had but recently been completed.

"Our attendants lighted the lamps and made ready the ropes to lower us down into the main shaft of the tomb.

"Three of the guides were let down with the ropes and the Professor and I followed. The darkness, a few feet away from the bottom of the shaft, was oppressive, but when the lamps were turned on full we could see very well.

"The guides led the way through many galleries, until we had come to a large octagonal vault-like room, which we entered through a high, narrow opening at a right angle with the gallery, of which this was the end.

"We had never seen one so constructed before. On close examination the Professor found the walls covered with hieroglyphics.

"These walls were as smooth as polished glass, and the hieroglyphics, deeply cut, could be followed readily by the Professor, who was soon absorbed in their translation.

" 'Wonderful! wonderful!' he exclaimed. 'This is the tomb we have long sought. From other wall writings we knew it must exist, but never until now was there the faintest knowledge of where it was. This discovery will set the tide of Egyptologists to this spot. I must be the first to herald it to the world.' And he was.

"No seeker for gold, on 'striking it rich,' could be more wildly elated than was he at this moment.

" 'The old king,' said he, 'who built this tomb, must have been a poetical lover. Listen to this tribute to his Queen, whose mummy lies in this crypt.' I could not see much poetry about the tribute, but the Professor said that we would have to fill in certain words. I couldn't but think that much of our own poetry is built on the same lines. If the right words are filled in and enough of them in their proper places, the poetry might be good.

"As he read on he would occasionally stop to comment. 'Cleopatra must have descended from this queen, whose beauty, through all the generations followed down, without loss to form or face, as no description of Cleopatra's rare beauty could excel this tribute.'

"Then he told me her points of excellence, and had me so wrought up that I forgot where I was, forgot the veiled ladies, forgot everything, and traveled back through all the thousands of years to where this queen stands in the flesh. I see her on the throne beside her lover king; see her receive the acclaim of her millions on millions of willing worshiping subjects. See her ruling Egypt in the zenith of its splendor—her ships are carrying the commerce of the world and all the world is paying her tribute—but hold—what is that! Is it a fancy, or is it true? See, she stands before me in the tomb! there—there in the narrow doorway! Ah, even more beautiful than the tribute. My senses leave me, and all the world is a blank.

"When I came to my senses again, the vault was full of people. 'Edward,' begged the Professor, 'what has come over you; here, a drop of this will bring you around all right.'

"As I open my eyes, there is the gentleman of the morning and the two ladies, but they are not veiled now.

"I was much embarrassed and excused myself, laying my faintness to the closeness of the vault. At sight of the younger lady, however, I felt a return of the weakness, as her face was a true likeness of the queen. Ruben, I have never before or since seen woman so beautiful as she.

"All were pleased with the Professor's translations and gave me but scant notice. I was glad of this, for I could the better watch the face which had but a moment before robbed me of my senses.

" 'Father, mother and daughter,' was my mental comment. I wondered at my sudden loss of interest in hieroglyphics; I could see but little in them. What did I care for a queen who had been a mummy for three or perhaps four or five thousand years. A thousand years, more or less, to a mummy, is of little matter—to a mummy and less to me, so long as certain other queens can walk about.

"I really began to have a distaste for hieroglyphics, seeing the great interest this unknown family took in them and through them, in the Professor. I snapped my watch case several times, and although it rang out in the close vault loud and clear, the Professor did not seem to hear it once as he came sailing along down the ages, talking about Dynasties. As he was getting along about the Sixth, I knew if I did not stop him, that it would be as dark outside as it was in the tomb by the time he had reached the Thirtieth, so I just spoke up and said: 'I am sorry to stop this highly edifying discourse on Mummyology and dynastical research, but if we expect to reach the boat and dinner by dark, we had better set out at once.' Would you believe me, Ruben, they all looked as though I had done them an injury, so much were they interested in the Professor's talk, but when we got out to the shaft of the tomb and tried to make the guides above hear us, and draw us up, then it was my turn for a little of their attention.

"All our calling and shaking of the rope had no effect. We tried to make some one of the guides climb up, but all shook their heads. 'Me no sailor, me no climb rope.'

"I knew that the Professor could talk about 'birds' and things, but when it came to action, he was as helpless as a child. It devolved upon me to bring them out. It had been three years since I left college, but the way I went up that rope you would have thought I was still a college boy well up in gymnastics.

"When I got to the top of the shaft I found the guides as sound asleep as their donkeys, lying in the sun as though they had not a care in life. Only the dogs of Constantinople can beat an Egyptian tomb guide when it comes to sleeping—he comes by it so naturally—his ancestors have been asleep so long. Ruben, this is an Egyptian joke."

"Yes," said I, "it is a little dark!"

"I soon had the party safely out of the tomb, and we made haste to return.

"Do what I could, while in the presence of the 'queen' —as she has ever been to me—there was that foolish boy-like 'in love at first sight' sort of feeling, that showed out so plainly that she must have thought me a very weak young man, indeed. And that, too, at a time when I wished to appear at my best. It is always that way. Ruben, were you ever in love?"

I made as though I did not hear him, and he went on with his story, which had become most intensely interesting to me.

"Long before we reached the steamer that night," continued Edward, "they must have wished many times that they had not been so interested in Egyptology.

"We lost our way in the darkness and did not reach the steamer until midnight.

"It was a mystery to me why those guides had missed the way, but one day in Memphis, shortly after, I met one of them, rather a bright fellow, and asked him for an explanation. At first all he would say was that: 'All sand, no path, very dark. Lose way.' His manner was so mysterious in saying these few simple sentences, that I led him out of hearing of any passerby and slipping into his hand the 'open sesame' of every Egyptian lip, he told me in substance that the chief guides of the two parties had arranged with another chief to fall upon us and rob us, but that for some reason their plans had miscarried. I shuddered to think of what might have been the result, as these treacherous fiends, who care only for money, might have murdered us there in the dark.

"It was so late when we reached the boat that we were all too tired and hungry for anything but something to eat, and then off to sleep.

"Next morning, as we awoke, we found ourselves in Memphis. The ladies had not yet come on deck when we left the steamer, so all we could do was to bid the gentleman a 'tourist's' good-by and seek our hotel. I hoped later to meet this interesting family, but they dropped out of my world almost as soon as they had entered it.

"We remained in Memphis a week longer, but I never before took so little interest in sightseeing. There was nothing pleasing in anything I saw; in fact, I scarcely saw anything. I was ever watching, watching for a face. I might be in a temple or a tomb, to see which others have traveled thousands of miles, but I saw no beauty in them.

"I was like the lone mariner, being tossed about without sun or compass, who had seen on a broad ocean a beautiful ship. He sought the ship, but it had passed out of his sight and he had lost it forever without learning its name or whence it had gone.

"We took a few excursions up and down the Nile, but I soon saw that I had lost all desire for travel.

"Wherever I went I found myself watching always for that unknown face, but it had gone from out my world as completely as had the ship of the lone mariner.

"We stopped at Rome, at Paris, and spent some weeks in London, but I never again saw the one object of my search.

"Almost a year has passed since then, and yet scarce a moment but what I feel the same longing desire to see again the only woman I have ever loved."

CHAPTER XXV.

Jack's heart beat wild with joy.
In all his wayward years,
How low so'ere the course he led,
A little child was ever wont
To touch the one sweet chord
Of all his dark life's way,
And bring him back to better self.

Having a strong, rugged constitution, unfitted for invalid purposes, I was soon sitting up in the most comfortable chair I had ever sat in—one that Edward had sent a day or two before.

The DeHertburns had been most kind. They had all been to see me, to express their gratitude.

"We can never repay you," said Mrs. DeHertburn one day.

"My dear lady, you have already done far more than my simple act could merit. Besides, you forget what an hourly joy it is to me to feel that I was permitted to save the life of Helen, who has crept into my heart as no child has ever done before. No, Mrs. DeHertburn, I am the one to feel grateful." And I really felt so.

My experience with this family was a revelation to me. Somehow I had always thought of the very rich as a people who cared only for outward show, people who were devoid of true heart sentiment. But here was a family whose place (I have since learned) was in the inner circle of the city's best people, with hearts brimming full of human feeling.

One day the nurse had wheeled me into the large room next to mine. It was a sort of parlor. As I sat reading I heard the tiniest knock on the door and called to the nurse to open it. As she did so, in ran Helen with an "Oh, Mister Ruben, I cumbed almost by myself. Nobody cumbed with me but Beatrice," who just then came in with a "Good-morning, Ruben."

"Yes, Mister Ruben, I bringed Beatrice with me, 'cause she is awful lonesome, 'cause Tousin Wallie went away off on the big water in a big ship, for papa, that day what you kept me from being an angel, and he won't cumbed back for a long, long time."

"Now, Helen," said Beatrice, with a faint little blush, "you promised mamma you would not talk so much today. We call her our little phonograph at home." This to me.

"I ain't a fonygraff. I on'y say what I fink myself. Am I a fonygraff, Mister Ruben? Beatrice is a fonygraff, 'cause she says lots of things what Tousin Wallie says." More little blushes.

"Mister Ruben, ain't you well now? You said when you got well you would tell me a story about that man what was a nice little boy when he was little, but a bad man when he growed up to be a man, but what always loved little children, and one day he was in a theatre and killed himself for them, because there was a fire he didn't want them to know about, and then all the little children put flowers on his grave and loved him ever since. You know, Mister Ruben, what I mean."

"If he does, Helen, he is a very bright young man to know from that mixture of yours. Ruben, does she always run on *like* this?"

"Ah, Miss Beatrice, if you knew how it pleases me to hear her child-talk you would not say a word to prevent her saying it as she wishes. She fills my heart with sunshine every time she comes."

"Now, Beatrice, you mustn't talk a bit, 'cause Mister Ruben is going to tell all about that good little boy what was a bad man, but loved little children."

"Is that the poem you wrote called 'Some Deed of Worth?'" asked Beatrice. "I heard brother Edward speak of it."

"Yes," said I, "if poem it may be called, but I had better tell it in prose, as Helen can scarcely understand it in my verses."

"I can understand it, Mister Ruben. Tousin Wallie often tells things to Beatrice in poetry, and I understand it real good."

I recited it for them, but will not ask you to listen to it here, as it is quite too long.

The story was a true one of a young Englishman, the son of an aristocratic family, who had high expectations for his future. The mother died praying that he might do "some deed of worth," but, like many another, he took the wrong course, and we know too well that:

"From palace to the wayside lane
Is but a step,
If led by Bacchus' luring hand!"

"Jack" became a song and dance actor. The company with which he was connected was giving a performance at one of the great manufacturing cities of England to a thousand children. While "Jack" was on the stage, doing his act, fire broke out behind the scenes, and but for him there would have been a panic. The curtain was dropped, and he renewed his efforts to amuse. His efforts were too great, for:

"A something broke, right here
I heard it snap,"

and he died on the stage, but he had held them while those behind had "fought the fire." He was buried at that city, and to-day:

"No hero's grave more honored
Or more loved than Jack's;
Kept white with flowers
Strewn there by loving little hands.
The first blooms of Spring,
The last of Autumn's bloom,
Are gathered for his mound,
The Mecca of a thousand little ones
Who hold his memory sweet.

They love him for his love for them.
For all this love, let no one say
His life a failure proved,
But in that life
That he might count
Some Deed of Worth."

I could but wonder at the interest with which this little child drank in the story, and was surprised to see how well she had understood it.

"Mister Ruben, ain't he a angel now? He didn't have to go to that Bad Place 'cause he was bad sometimes, did he? He was so good to save all the little children.

Wouldn't they all feel sorry when they are angels if they can't find Jack in heaven?

"Little children love people what saves them. I love you, Mister Ruben, oh, lots more than this much——" and she spread her little arms as wide as she could, making my heart fairly bound with joy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Ruben, were you ever in love?" asked Edward.
"Yes; once," said I, "but I lost."
"Cheer up; you'll win her yet."
"I hope not!"
"Why?" asked he.
"Because she married the other fellow."

"Ruben, I once asked you if you were ever in love, but you did not answer me. Were you?"

"Yes, Edward, once; but I lost."

"Cheer up, my boy, you'll win her yet."

"I hope not," said I.

"Why?"

"Because she married the other fellow."

"Come, now, Ruben, you must tell me all about it, if it is not too tender a subject. One's own misfortunes seem easier to bear if they can hear those of others."

He had been so kind to me that I could but begin my story, which I did at once:

"Alice was the daughter of the big Squire of the County. Although she lived many miles from Highmont, she used often to visit our village, where she had a married sister. I shall never forget the first time I saw her. She may not have been beautiful, but my young fancy painted her as such. Her sister lived near the village school-house. While on these various visits I cared little for the games at 'recess' or the noon hour, preferring to 'hang around' and watch for Alice. She smiled on me one day! The world seemed to bloom anew, and after that we were friends. We grew older, yet both were very young when she went away to school. At this school was my sister. They were good friends, Alice and Anna. How I did prize the letters that Sister Anna wrote me from there! How the lines in which Alice played the principle part did make my little heart beat—beat as nothing could make it beat now, for older hearts are harder, truer mayhap, but harder.

"Years passed. When I was grown I met Alice and her husband. Not the dainty, black-eyed, mischievous Alice; not Alice, the coquette, but just good, zealous, homely Alice. I met her on the train that brought me to New York. I kissed her—couldn't help it, for old time sake—my rival was there, but he only smiled.

"Alice talked of the old days, and I listened. She wasn't pretty any more, and I didn't love her any more, but do you know I was, oh, so glad, to see her and hear her talk? I forgot she wasn't pretty; I forgot she wasn't Alice of the old days, when to crush a heart was a joy to her. I just listened and was glad to hear her voice. It brought back happy memories of days, when life was not the hard, real life, but the flower life of childhood.

"When I looked at Alice I thought of the ring she sent back, with 'I was only in fun!' How happy it made me feel to remember that 'only in fun!' I thought of what might have been had she not been 'only in fun,' and kept the ring. Well, I looked at Charlie, and said a silent say in my heart: Old boy, I'm glad she's yours.'"

Edward seemed greatly interested in my one love story and was quite amused when I told him that the serious part of it all occurred between the tenth and fifteenth year of my life. The ring having been returned at fourteen.

"Your love," said Edward, "was that of childhood, not the real love of maturity."

"Ah," said I, "mine was real. When Alice sent back my 'filled' ring which I had worked so hard to pay for (it cost two dollars at the village store), I felt there was nothing left for me to live for. It was a sad blow to my little heart, but I must confess that the point where the blow struck is now entirely healed."

Edward was ever sad of late. He always seemed to be thinking of that "face." I would defend my young love and try thus to draw his mind from his brooding, hoping to get him to forget, as I had forgotten, so I said:

"You have only the face to remember. I had face, friendship and, as I thought, love, and lost all. You have only the face; had you known the character, it might have been one entirely uncongenial to you—unsuited to your nature."

"A face like hers," returned Edward, "was but the index of a character so pure and gentle that I could always love. Though she returned a thousand rings, my heart could not but go out to her. I have had many fancies which I thought were loves, but never until I saw that face in the tomb did my heart tell me what real love meant."

I fain would have continued but he seemed more sad as he talked of the "face," and I thought to turn his mind by asking him how long the doctors intended to keep me shut up, away from my outdoor life.

"Ruben," said he, "Dr. Whipple says you are doing so well that in a week's time I may take you for a drive in Central Park, which you say you have once seen."

"Yes," I said, "once—from the outside." I smiled as I recalled that "once."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Stopping in front of a tall, rough-looking stone, Edward said:

"'That is Cleopatra's Needle!'

"'Where's her thread?' I asked, thinking to jest away that look of sadness from his face."

One week from the day that Edward had promised to take me driving through Central Park he, with Beatrice and Helen, were at the hospital.

Dr. Whipple said it was quite safe for me to be out for two or three hours.

Helen was very happy that morning. "Mamma said I would be in the way, but I told her you said I was never in the way. Am I ever in the way, Mister Ruben?"

"No, Helen, and you never will be. I will always be happiest when you are near me."

"Beatrice, you must tell mamma what Mister Ruben said and then she will always let me come.

"Mister Ruben, I call this carriage my Victory. Mamma says I have too many, but I don't—only this one.

"Mister Ruben, are you glad to get out doors? I would be if I staid in a long, long time like you did."

Not far from the "Rizervoy" Helen said: "That's our house, Mister Ruben. Oh, there's mamma at the window," as she waved her little gloved hand. "And see, Mister Ruben, here's where you saved me. Are you sorry I run'd across the street?"

If ever a man was really happy in thinking of an accident I was that man. I felt if it ever came in my way to do a good turn to the grocer, whose horse had caused it, I would do it with a whole heart.

Edward, during the drive to the park, kept pointing out the various places of interest, but none of them were new to me.

Beatrice seemed unusually happy that morning. I had never seen her in such fine spirits.

I attributed it to the fresh bracing air and the beautiful park through which we were driving, but that could not be the reason, for she said they drove through it nearly every day.

I had never noticed her so closely before. Of course I could not help noting that she was very pretty the first time I had seen her, but now that I could study her face I was surprised at its great beauty.

She had a mass of light brown hair, large, lustrous eyes and the prettiest pink and white complexion I had ever seen. Her face was a type one seldom meets with, but once seen the picture of it remains fixed in the mind. Her manner was as sweet as her face was pretty. There was no affectation. She was open and frank in her speech, and withal I found myself quite envying "Wallie" before we returned to the hospital.

"Oh, Mister Ruben, I clear forgot to tell you the big news. Tousin Wallie's coming home to-morrow on the big ship, and Beatrice is, oh, so happy!" No white in the face now; pink predominates.

"Why, Helen," said I, "you told me that 'Wallie' would not come back for a long, long time!"

"Well, I know, but that is what Sister Beatrice said. She said it would be an age!"

"Helen, Helen, you know what I told you before we started?" said Beatrice, with reproving look.

"Oh, yes, I know; you told me I should not say 'Wallie' once—and that you would give me all the bonbons I could eat if I didn't. Oh, I am so sorry" (patting Beatrice on the cheek), "dear, sweet, lovely sister Beatrice that I said that—because—because I love bonbons so much."

"Yes," said Edward, "Tousin Wallie returns to-morrow. Our firm had a very important transaction in London that really required one of the firm to look after, but neither father nor I could possibly leave at the time, and we were compelled to trust it to one of our men, and we chose Wallace."

"No," broke in Helen, "he's Tousin Wallie, Tousin Wallie—he ain't 'Wallace' never."

"Well," resumed Edward good naturedly, "Tousin Wallie then. It was a great risk on our part as he is quite young—just turned of age—but he is remarkably bright for one so young. He finished the work in an incredibly short time, and to our entire satisfaction. The London firm with which the business was is an old house and considered very shrewd in the market, but 'Wallie' was quite able to protect our interests. We are greatly pleased with him."

I thought that Beatrice was going to throw her arms around her brother's neck right then and there, as she seemed so happy.

At one place in the park Edward had the driver stop.

I glanced about to see what there was to look at, but saw nothing to be compared with other parts where we had not stopped. In fact, all that I saw was a big, tall, rough looking stone set on end, but Edward sat there in the carriage and looked a long while at that stone. I could see that his face was more sad than I had ever seen it before. Even more sad than when he told me about the lost "face" in Egypt.

"Ruben," said he finally, "do you know what that stone is?"

"No," said I, "why should I? I have never even seen the park before except from the outside." But the way he asked me, and the way he looked, I felt sure he was going to tell me that it was a "gravestone" erected to the memory of some dear friend, and yet I could not think it possible that any one should be buried in a public park.

"That," said he, "is Cleopatra's Needle."

"Where's her thread?" I asked thinking to jest away that look of sadness from his face.

He did not smile, but sat there silent.

"Brother Edward, why do you always stop at this stone and look at it so long, and then all the way home never say a word?" and Helen cuddled her little head on her brother's shoulder and looked up into his face, so sweet like, that I could scarcely believe he could resist her affection, but he never noticed her at all.

The driver, without being told, turned and drove out of the park.

* * * * * * * *

I wrote a long letter to sister Anna that afternoon. I told her of the drive through the beautiful park. "It is larger," I wrote, "than our whole farm at home, and full of flowers and trees; with wide driveways, and winding walks and bridges that we drove under; with little lakes on which boats floated and geese with the longest necks I had ever seen swam about. There were more animals than we ever saw at a circus, and the queerest animals! Some of them I had never heard of. One big fellow in a tank of water, when he ate hay, opened the whole front part of his head and seemed to enjoy it. I would tell you his name only that it would make my letter too long. I never could write of all I've seen to-day. I could not have believed there was so much beauty in the world, and yet, sister, do you know, the people who live here think very little about it! Really they look at all these surpassing scenes with as little interest as we would look at the woods lot back of the barn. I guess it is because they have had it to look at from childhood. Somebody has said: 'Beautiful is not beautiful if you have only beauty to look at,' but I know that what I have seen to-day will never lose its charm for me.

"You see, Anna, I did a favor for a family some time ago, and you would be surprised to know how much they all appreciated it. There is in this family the father and mother, one son, a young man of twenty-three, and two daughters, one a young lady and the other the dearest, sweetest child you ever saw, and the brightest talker you ever heard, for one of her age. What is so nice about her is that she likes to talk, and I never tire listening to her. She says she loves me 'oh, so much.' You know, sister, the litle girls always did like me—up to a certain age. Oh, I forgot to tell you the reason the child says she loves me. One day I was going up the street that Bill lives on —you know it is called Fifth Avenue—when there was a grocer's wagon going along and I just pushed Helen (Helen's her name, Helen DeHertburn) to one side so that the wheel of the wagon would not touch her as it passed, and the family seemed to think I had done something great. Why they would often send me fruit down to the big house where I have been stopping temporarily, I having changed my boarding place for a while, there were so many people at the other house. What I liked even better than the fruit were the flowers that Helen 'bringed' me every day. Not having done enough, the three took me in their carriage up Fifth Avenue and through the park that I've been telling you about. I have to smile to hear Helen tease her sister Beatrice about a young man whom she calls 'Tousin Wallie.' I often think, at such times, of our Bill, whom I've never yet seen or heard of. He must be different from Beatrice's Tousin Wallie, for he is in the employ of her father, while our Bill simply works for somebody.

"Must stop, with best wishes to the whole community, not forgetting the 'lone widows.' Tell 'em I am not lost yet. I am your loving brother, A. RUBEN."

"P. S.—I nearly forgot to say that when I pushed Helen away from the wagon that one of my legs somehow got broken a little. Don't worry or tell anyone about it, as it was only a trifle. It was nothing but those two bones below the knee, but they soon got well. You can't imagine what a fine time I have been having since it occurred—never have had so good a time in all my life!

"When you see Joe Yong tell him that I wish he was in New York. I could introduce him to a real live professor. I am sure Joe would like him. He is not much of a talker, but I found him quite lively the one time I met him. It was at a place they call a "club." People who saw us meet remarked that we were like two old friends, almost like brothers—some brothers."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If it were not out of place to moralize at this point, I would say that the teacher who has to use a switch is not a fit person to teach. If I could say it here, it would compensate me for the dailies I used to get.

When Helen and Beatrice came the next afternoon, Helen was in great glee, and Beatrice was all smiles, for, as Helen said: "Tousin Wallie has come back and he bringed me the most pretty things you ever saw, and to-morrow I am going to make him come to see you."

"Yes; but, Helen," said I, "he may not want to come. I am of no interest to him; he does not know me."

"Oh, Mr. Ruben, you don't know Tousin Wallie. He alays does just what I ask him. He knows if he don't I will say things, and he says I know too many things to say, so he does anything I ask. I would not tell him who you are, or anything. I on'y said you were my little beau. Won't he be fooled when he sees how big you are? Oh, it will be such fun! When you hear us coming you must jump behind the bed, then when we come in I will say 'Boo!' and you must jump up quick, and won't he be scared?" And the little darling was so delighted with the prospect that it did me a world of good to see her, as she planned the morrow's meeting. "Mr. Ruben, see this pretty pin Tousin Wallie bringed me!" and then, in a whisper, watching Beatrice out of the corners of her eyes, "and, oh, Mr. Ruben, he bringed Beatrice the beautifulest ring you ever, ever saw, but don't tell anybody at all."

"Helen, what are you saying to Ruben? You know you promised!"

"Yes, Sister Beatrice, but I on'y just whispered—that don't count, does it, Mr. Ruben? No, Sister Beatrice, that don't count. We must go now. We on'y had time to run in a minute, and tell you. Now, remember, Mister Ruben, when I say 'Boo!'" And I watched for them to get into the carriage, and as they drove away Helen was waving her little hand up to my window.

Such had been my fate all my life. The little girls had always seemed to love me, but love me only as they would a good, gentle old family horse, that would allow them to caress and fondle it. Would this be my fate always? Would there never come a time when they would not outgrow their childish affection for me? I feared not, and in my happiness I was really sad.

"To-morrow" often seems ages away. I must have spent hours at the window, watching, watching.

Why should I take so much interest in the coming of a stranger? What was he to me, or I to him, that I should look forward to his coming as though he were a friend, or my own Bill? I had begun to lose all interest in Bill! Here I had been weeks in New York, and with my name in the paper a number of times—(he certainly must have seen it and known I was in the city)—and he had not sought me out. He is ashamed of his old friend Rube. Good enough at home, but not good enough for Fifth Avenue!

And thus I was brooding myself into a most unhappy state of mind when I saw a carriage turning in, as though to stop in front of the hospital.

It is Helen and Beatrice, and with them a fine-looking gentleman. Can that be Wallie? How odd the name sounds when applied to that tall, elegant-looking young man with them! They are out of the carriage, coming up in the elevator. I mentally count the stories. Now they are in the hallway, but I am safe behind the bed, so arranged as to quickly jump out. They are in the room. I can hear, but cannot see them. I hear a little laugh, a little voice cries out "Boo!" I jump out.

"Bill!"

"Rube!" is all we can say, as we stand watching each other.

"What's the matter, Mister Ruben? what's the matter, Tousin Wallie? Who told you each other's names? Beatrice, you told them—and spoiled my fun," and she was nearly crying from disappointment! But we were soon a happy, merry party when explanations had been made.

"Why, Helen," said I, "your Tousin Wallie is my Bill."

"Yes," said Bill; "and, Helen, your Ruben is my Rube, too."

"Where did you know Wallie, Mister Ruben? You never saw him, did you? You never told me he was yours! Oh, Beatrice, ain't it jolly?" and she jumped up and down for joy. Then Bill and I told how we had been born and reared in the same little town away off among the mountains.

"Helen," said I, "there are only a few houses there, and all of them so small that you would wonder that people could live in them; but we never knew about the great houses in the city, and were very happy in our homes. We went to a little school; only one room. The big boys and the little boys, the big girls and the little girls, all in that one little school-house! It kept the teacher so busy whipping that he never had time to teach."

"You never got whipped, did you, Mister Ruben?" asked Helen, but Bill was so overcome with the question that I could not reply, giving him a chance to exclaim "Did he?" with much emphasis on the "did."

"Rube," asked Bill, "do you remember how Hoard whipped you every day all winter just to make you cry, and didn't bring the tears until one day in the spring?"

It was my turn to exclaim, "Do I?"

It was a revelation to Helen and Beatrice to hear of children being beaten with sticks and struck upon their little hands with ferrules by big, grown men, who had not education enough to occupy their time at teaching! I told them, however, that the teachers of the present day are becoming more civilized and less barbarous.

"I would fight 'em!" exclaimed Helen, and this was the first time I had seen her show any temper. I could not but think that what was once looked upon as absolutely necessary in the training of children in making them do what was the right, only resulted in bringing out and nurturing the evil in them. If it were not out of place to moralize at this point, I would say that the teacher who has to use a switch is not a fit person to teach. If I could say it here, it would in a small measure compensate me for the "dailies" I used to get.

"On'y the big men were bad and whipped little children; the nice lady teachers didn't whip, did they, Mister Ruben?"

"Ask Bill!" said I, to even matters up with him.

"Do they, Tousin Wallie?"

"Oh, yes; they used to whip Ruben often!" and still Bill was ahead.

"I am so sorry, Mister Ruben!" That evened them up.

The time passed so quickly that the hour for my friends to go had come long before I had begun to realize my good fortune in the strange manner in which Bill and I had found each other. He promised to come again on the morrow, and they left me a very lonely young man.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The bad boy of a village became the great man of a city.

That was a happy week for me. Bill came nearly every day to visit me. He had not been at the old home for two years; and while his mother had written him often, there were many things she had not told him, and I had to tell something about nearly everybody for miles around Highmont. It made little difference what I told. Bill said the bare mention of a name gave him pleasure. He did not care, he said, if Jake Mitchell had painted his barn blue or green, just so he heard Jake's name, and was glad, too, that I had mentioned the barn, for it brought up happy memories of the day he had helped raise it.

"You helped! What could you do? You were only a child then."

"Oh, yes. I helped Elenora wait on the table at noon!"

It all came back to me then. I had heard of his helping on that memorable occasion, and how he had put salt in all the old ladies' tea, and the trouble he caused. Bill may be all right now, but at barn raisings he had to be watched.

"And what has become of bad John Woodman?" asked Bill. John had been the worst boy who had ever lived at Highmont. His was the name that made the small boy tremble. "I'll tell John Woodman on yer, if yer don't gimme the core of yer apple!" always produced the core and as much of the apple as was left at the time the threat was made. And now Bill, who I knew had lost many a "core," wanted to know what had become of this bad boy.

"What!" said I in surprise, "haven't you heard how he went to Chicago, became one of that city's great builders, was elected Alderman and is looked upon as one of the great men of that city? And haven't you heard how that when Libby prison was to be taken down and removed from Richmond to Chicago, it was John who was chosen to do the important work and how well he did it? Yes, Bill, the bad boy of a village became the great man of a city."

"Oh, I could ask you a thousand questions more," said Bill; "to hear of that dear old town fairly makes my heart overflow with sweet memories. Oh, yes, and what has become of your old Aunt Racheal, at whose house we used to go to visit at sugar-making time? You know she lived away down in the valley, ten miles away from town."

"Poor Aunt Racheal," said I, "she died last summer."

"And what became of the old barren farm she lived on? She had no children to leave it to."

"She left it," said I, "to sister Anna and me, but whatever we can do with it I do not know. So far, nobody will take it and pay the taxes for its use, but, Bill, didn't we have fun on those trips?"

"One of the sweetest memories of my life was my visiting at her home. You know she lived in an old log hewn double cabin. Everything about it, even to this day, seems hallowed—the gourd we drank from at the well, with its long 'sweep,' the swinging crane in the old wide fireplace—the corn pone she made and baked in the Dutch oven, set before the fire, with ashes and coals heaped around and over it—the maple 'taffy' she fed us on —the great old-fashioned copper cents she gave me—

cents whose value has never been equaled by all the dollars I've had since—the stories she told us no writer has ever excelled! In a word, Aunt Racheal was my childhood goddess. Why she was so much to me I have never known. She was very old and never a beauty; I suppose she was quite ugly in reality, but to me no queen of beauty ever held the place in my affections that Aunt Racheal held. I remember going down with father and mother in a sleigh one bitter cold day, and how they sat me on a hot paper-wrapped brick to keep me warm. I did not think of the cold, for I was 'goin' ter Aunt Rachel's.' Bill, I often wonder if the children of the great city have their Aunt Racheals. I know, if they have, that none of them could ever compare with mine.

"She became very feeble toward the last. Father brought her to our home and gave her of the best we had, making her later days as happy as possible."

CHAPTER XXX.

A wrong cannot be changed into a right by words, be they never so cunningly arranged.

"And now, Bill, you have much to explain to me as to how you have succeeded so well in New York in the few years you have been away from the village. How did you gain the friendship of this great family with whom you seem to be on such intimate relations? I have not heard of your saving the life of any of its members?"

"Well," he began, "you may remember of my once telling you of a distant relative of my mother's who had made a vast fortune in the West and had removed to New York. Well, Mr. DeHertbern is that relative. We had lost track of him for years. When I came here a boy of sixteen, full of enterprise, I thought that all I need do was to go into an office, ask for a position and be shown to a cushioned seat and given a gold pen to write with. The first day here caused me to drop both cushion and pen. The second day I had begun to grow a bit discouraged. No one wanted any help. It was either 'the dull season' or 'we want a boy with experience' or a dozen other 'ors.' My country notions of the easy paths of the city were fast clogging up those paths, and as one after another dropped, I found all the paths entirely blocked. I had reached that point where I would have taken anything offered, yet I still sought for a place among the offices down town. By chance I saw on a great office the name

'DeHertbern,' and, like the country boy I was, I thought of that distant relative, and sent in my name. By the barest chance it reached Mr. DeHertbern himself. He sent for me to come to his private office.

"'Well, my young man, what can I do for you?'

"'I am hunting for a position.'

"'What can you do?'

"I had not thought of that, never having reached so far up toward a position before; but I answered, 'I came here from the country. I do not know that there is a single thing I can do, but I am strong and—and will try to do what I am given to do.

"'From the country! Van Alden! Odd name!' He sat meditating aloud, seeming entirely to forget that I was there. 'I never knew but one of that name before. A dear cousin of my mother's—she married a Van Alden—I have not heard of her for years—dear Cousin Mary!'

"'Why, my mother's name is Mary.'

"'What was her maiden name?'

"'Mary Wallace!'

"'What, Mary Wallace, of ——, Kentucky?' now all attention.

"'Yes, and daughter of Thomas Wallace. She married my father, William Van Alden, after whom I was named.'

"'My boy, I have a place for you. If you are a son of Mary Wallace Van Alden, you come from one of the best families of Kentucky, and I will try to help you make your way in New York. Your grandfather once did me a favor when I was a poor boy, and I then said I would some day return it. It has been a long time unpaid—but I will repay it! What did you say your first name is?'

"'William Wallace.'

"'Well, Wallace, I am going to make you work. You will think cutting cord wood, or thinning corn on a hot day very easy work, but it will do you good, and if you can stand it you will thank me for making it hard at the start. If I find you capable and quick, and you should be both with Wallace blood in your veins, I will advance you from time to time, but I will not advance you from one position to another until I am more than convinced that you know the first one well. I will take pride in making you a man worthy the name your mother bore. I shall call you Wallace. I like that better than William, besides the boys can't nickname you Bill.' I wanted to smile as I thought of 'Bill' as the only name I could ever remember of having to answer to.

" 'My son, Edward,' continued Mr. DeHertbern, 'is now away at college. I shall not mention your even distant relationship to my family until you have proven yourself worthy, therefore this shall be an incentive to you to do well.'

"I cared very little wether he ever mentioned it, so far as his son was concerned, but when his pretty little daughter used to come down to the office, oh, how I did wish I had the right to call her 'Cousin Beatrice,' and as year after year she grew more and more beautiful I worked harder and even harder to deserve that right. About a year ago Helen began coming to the office. I soon made friends with her, as I was where I had more leisure and less of the office drudgery to do. At first she would speak to me as 'Mr. Vain Allen,' then as she would hear her father call me 'Wallace,' she came to calling me 'Wallace.' One day she told me, 'Mr. Wallace, when I like people awful much I call 'em "Tousin." I'm going to call you "Tousin Wallie." Won't that be fun? Tousin Wallie!' And after that she would call me by no other name. It was about this time that Mr. DeHertbern invited me to his house to dinner—the very first time in the four years I had been with him. In all that time I had never spoken of the relationship to any one save to my mother, who was overjoyed to hear of my good fortune in getting a place with Mr. DeHertbern.

"That evening, after dinner, and when we were all seated in the large family room, Mr. DeHertbern began and told a very entertaining story of his younger days, when he was poor. He told how that a man by the name of Thomas Wallace had given him the money with which he was enabled to reach California. 'I was fortunate,' said he, 'in meeting with success from the very start. I soon returned the money—several times the amount I had been given—but I never felt that the debt was cancelled. Years after I had come to New York, a young man applied to me for a position. I gave it; he proved worthy, as I felt he would. Thomas Wallace was my mother's cousin.'

"The family were now all attention as Mr. DeHertbern continued his story. 'And the young man,' (speaking very slowly) 'was the grandson of Thomas Wallace, and that young man is your cousin, William Wallace Van Alden.' Rube, I tell you it was worth four years' waiting to get the reception I was given at that moment. Little Helen nearly cried for joy. 'Oh, mamma,' she said 'he is really and truly "Tousin Wallie."'

"I'm afraid in the cousinly kisses they forgot distance altogether, but I did not remind them of it, especially so Beatrice, who seemed quite as happy as Helen. Since that time I have not only been advanced rapidly in the business, but I am always given a welcome in their home.

"But, Rube, you have had enough of my story. Tell me your experience since coming to New York," and I told it during his several visits.

Bill called it "Rube's continued story." He laughed over my many mistakes.

"I'll wager," said I, "that no city boy who had never been outside of his own town in his life; one who had never heard of the country except as a place where grass grows, could have done any better in Highmont than I did in New York. Don't you remember, Bill, the two preacher's boys, Walt Heaver and Wilbur Cannon, who used to come with their fathers quarterly meeting time? Oh, the fun we had with them! You mind how Walt wanted some specimens of 'last year's bird's nests' to take home and how we got behind the trees while he pulled down a hornet's nest that was still in business? Wasn't he a sight the next day! He said afterward that it looked just like the picture of an oriole's nest. And don't you mind the day we taught Wilbur the 'half bushel' trick and how he had to stay in bed for two days afterward! I may be very ignorant of city ways, but so far I've not picked any 'last year's birds nests' or tried to kick a half bushel with my heels higher than somebody else. Walt and Wilbur were simply ignorant of things about which they had not heard. Such may have been the case with me. I may have been pretty 'green,' but I guess the professor with the 'baby pillow mittens,' is about the only one who is ahead so far, except the cab driver, and I will get along up his way before I am through. With the professor, you notice, I have no spirit of revenge. I simply am satisfied to allow him to 'wear the belt,' as they say here. I have no desire to get anywhere near even with him. But say, Bill, when I wrote sister Anna I told her to tell big Joe Long that if he came to New York that I would introduce him to a friend of mine, 'a real live professor.' If Joe comes—well, Bill, you know big Joe was the only one who could out box me, and he has a notion that he knows the 'manly art' by heart. I thought I knew it, too, but went clear asleep trying to prove it to the professor."

"Do you know," asked Bill, "that Edward understands the art of self defense? In fencing with swords he disarmed a French professor from Paris who wore championship medals, and as a pistol shot he has few equals. He is so non-communicative, however, that one never would know from him what he can do. He is powerfully built and his muscles are like finely tempered steel. Unlike too many rich men's sons, he has the constitution of a yeoman. Have you heard him sing, accompanied on his guitar? You have not? Well you have that pleasure in store. I have never heard so fine a voice as his."

And as Bill ran on I wondered if there were anything Edward could not do.

Just then the subject of our conversation came into the conservatory, where I often sat after I could walk about.

"Well, well," said he in his most cheerful manner, "and so the invalid is walking about! Glad to see you improve so fast, but Ruben, remember there is no hurry; you must give the bones plenty of time to knit!"

"Dr. Whipple says it will be safe for me to leave the hospital in one week from to-day."

"So soon?" asked Edward. "And Ruben, that is what brings me here to-day. Father and I have been talking the matter over and we feel an interest in your future. What do you purpose doing when you have bidden good-bye to your good gentle nurse and faithful Dr. Whipple?"

"In the first place," I replied, "Bill has promised to take me out to see the city and——"

"Keep you off the Bowery," broke in Bill.

"We will take a few trips around, and I will then have to go back home, as it has taken me a long time to do what I had come for—to find my friend Bill."

"I do not mean your immediate intentions. What have you laid out as a life work?"

"I suppose I shall go back and run the farm, that is about all I am fitted for, and I am sure it is the only thing I can afford to do, as I have not the necessary education for a profession and cannot afford to gain such an education."

"That is just the point of which I wish to speak," said Edward. "Father and I have both noticed that you have a turn for a profession."

I thought again of the only two I had had much experience with since I came to the city, neither of which I would choose as a life work.

"How would you like medicine?"

"No. I never liked medicine—even as a child!"

"How would you like the ministry?"

"Bill, think of 'Rube' as a preacher! No, Edward, there are already too many preaching without a 'call.' "

"The law, then?"

"There," said I, "is the only one I care anything about. In it I could fight, contend, argue and never stop till 'lightning strikes the building.' I don't want any little damage case law, or the defending of a man who has deliberately done a wrong, but in defense of a principle or a downtrodden fellow being I could fight to a finish and never tire."

"Bravo, Ruben! You talk like you were in the courtroom already. Yes, Ruben, law should be your life's work, and we want you to begin at once its study," said Edward.

"I might myself wish to begin it, but my reason would tell me to go back home and run the farm, that being the only calling I know how to run without capital. It takes money, Edward, to fit one's self for the law, and money sufficient I have not."

"That is the smallest item in the whole matter," said Edward. "If you will agree to go to all the trouble to study—and it will be hard work—years of it—why, we will look after the money part, and be most happy for the privilege."

"What! you pay for my schooling, my education! Why should you? I have no right to accept so great an offer. I have already been too long a care to you!"

"You forget," he replied, "what we owe to you. But for you Helen's life had been destroyed and our home made desolate."

"Then you would pay me in money for doing that which I had been a craven coward not to do? No, Edward, I am repaid a thousand times already, and as long as memory lasts the payments will run on, growing sweeter as the years come and go. I appreciate your kind wish, and thank you for it, but I can never accept money in any form for doing a duty."

He seemed hardly to comprehend my refusal. I feared I had been too abrupt in it, and put it in other words less emphatic, but with the same meaning. He remained but a short time. He said to Bill afterward that he had never before seen a man so determined as I. He could not see why I had thrown away an opportunity to reach the object of my ambition.

"Why," said he, "there are single days when we make more money than Ruben's course at college would cost—and yet he would not allow us to work just one day for him." It is so strange how words can be used. To look at Edward's sentence to Bill, I had been ungrateful not to allow them to work that one day for me, and for a long time I was puzzled to know why it had looked that way, but then this thought came to me: A wrong cannot he changed into a right by words, be they never so cunningly arranged.

"It would have been a pleasure to the DeHertberns," said Bill, "to have sent you through college."

"But then," said I, "it is not their pleasure, but my own self-respect which must govern my own actions. I have no financial claim on them, however grateful they may feel toward me, and to have accepted what I had no right to accept would have made me feel as though I were being educated as a child from the almshouse, and they would always have looked upon me as a possession and not as a self-respecting man. No, Bill; I will go back to the hills and plow, sow and reap, but I will take back with me an unbroken spirit."

When Bill had told me of the quiet good the DeHertberns were continually doing, I could more fully appreciate Edward's surprise and disappointment at my refusal to accept the law course at college.

"Nobody," said Bill, "knows the good that family does during each year. They always refuse to do anything through the organized charities, for, as Mr. DeHertbern says, it costs two dollars to distribute one dollar, and the real needy might starve before help would reach them. He says the men who run these organizations are usually a lot of broken-down politicians, who would be paupers themselves did not their party look after them, and yet the arrogance with which they conduct the affairs of the organizations is almost enough to drive the self-respecting poor to the river dock, rather than to ask for assistance at their hands.

"I have often gone with Edward in our 'slumming' suits, and quietly helped some poor family. We personally investigate each case, for, Ruben, the city is full of imposters. We have often found a family drinking and feasting which we had been told was on the verge of starvation. I have often heard Edward say that the position of the very rich is a trying one. 'If one give,' he would say, 'in a way that the public knows of it, then one is giving only for show. If one give quietly, so that the public knows nothing of it, then one is close, miserly, stingy, and don't deserve the smiles of fortune. Again, if one give and the public knows of it, then one is overrun with the most beseeching letters, calls are made at one's office, at one's home, on the street, everywhere, until life is a burden,' and so they let the public think of them as close and miserly, and go on selecting their own charities."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ten thousand human beings cast out upon a cold, selfish world that the few may make a little larger per cent.!

I never knew how far-reaching a simple story could be until one day Bill asked me about the Anarchists' story of "The Death of Little Edith." I had almost forgotten that I had told Helen and Beatrice about Edith, once when Helen had begged me to "tell her a tale."

"Well," said Bill, "Helen told the story when she went home; told it and cried as though her little heart would break. That very day Mr. DeHertbern had had a long conference with a syndicate of men about organizing a trust to control the manufacture of a great product. The papers were all in shape, ready for signing the next day. Mr. DeHertbern was the one man who could put the 'deal' through. If his signature was obtained, the combination of fifty 'plants' was assured; if he refused, the 'plants' remained as they were. Next day every member of the syndicate was present. They were in high spirits. They were about to consummate that which they had worked years to gain. I was at the meeting. The chairman was in his seat, and the assembly was called to order.

" 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'we have very little more to do—the work has all been done, but the signing of a few papers. Mr. DeHertbern, you examined this paper yesterday. Just sign here please—there, on that line.'

" 'One moment,' began Mr. DeHertbern. 'I did not quite understand yesterday how, by this combination, we would gain that extra per cent. In fact, I did not think of it further than that it would be gained.'

"'Mr. Secretary,' said the chairman, 'you perhaps known more about that than any one else. Kindly explain to Mr. DeHertbern.' The secretary, a man of very great importance, from a certain standpoint—his own—arose with:

"'Mr. Chairman and assembled gentlemen: I have given this matter very deep study. In fact, it was I who conceived the thought. It was born in my brain, and, as the chairman wisely said, I should know more about the matter than any of you; and I do. By this combination we will eliminate competition among the various companies and thereby gain higher dividends; but, gentlemen, the great source of gain will be in the cutting down of plants. Where we now have fifty, we will be able to do the same work with forty. Think of it, gentlemen. Ten plants cut off will mean a dividend that will place our stock among the best paying in the land.' (Cheers and rubbing together of hands among the members of the syndicate, who are now all smiles.)

"'One word further,' said Mr. DeHertbern. 'How many mill hands will this save us?' Looking over the list, the secretary said:

"'Well, taking the ten mills I will close, I find they have an average pay roll of one thousand each—thus I will cut the pay-roll down ten thousand people. Think of it, gentlemen, ten thousand that we won't have to pay!'

"'Yes,' quietly spoke Mr. DeHertbern, 'but what will become of these ten thousand?'

"'Ah, there it is again!' replied the secretary, his face in a wreath of smiles. 'I had forgotten to speak of that point. A very important point it is. These ten thousand, not knowing how to do any other kind of work, will have to follow us to our forty remaining factories, and with this extra number of idle hands we can get labor at our own price, and I will make a still greater per cent. for you. Gentlemen, the more I think on the subject, the more I see the greatness of my conception.'

" 'I am glad to hear your explanation, Mr. Secretary,' said Mr. DeHertbern. 'You make it indeed plain. I had not looked upon the matter in that light before, and I warrant that few gentlemen in the room have. Who of you want an extra per cent. for your money gained at the terrible price—ten thousand human beings cast out upon a cold, selfish world in order that we few here assembled may make—what we do not need—a little larger per cent. for our money. Gentlemen, I will not sign.' And no one urged him. The meeting adjourned. The various members quietly left the room, and went back to their fifty plants."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Then tell me, I begged, how can you distinguish the gentlemen from the waiters?"

"You can't very well at the beginning of a dinner, but at the close it is not at all difficult, as the sober ones are the waiters. This may not be original, but original things are not looked for at a banquet."

The day came for me to leave the hospital. For many reasons I was almost sorry to go. When I look back upon those weeks I cannot remember a thing I would now have different. Even the pain is forgotten in the pleasure. Dr. Whipple said I had been a most obedient patient, while the nurse, when she bid me good-bye, seemed even sad, and hoped I would come back some time—but not as a patient.

Bill came for me and we went away together. The reception I got at the boarding-house that evening was what Bill called an "ovation." Even the Heathen seemed glad to welcome me back. The landlady said that old Mrs. Crowley had taken the best of care of my carpet sack and umbrella. "An', yis, Misther Rubing, I lit naw wan sa yer buke. I hid it awa' far ye." I was thankful to her, for one never likes their writing to be seen until it reaches the printer. No doubt, at this particular point, some reader will stop long enough for a mental: "Ruben, there's where you made a mistake. Had you shown your manuscript, I might not now be a reader."

In selecting my boarding place, by a queer coincidence I had gone but just around the corner from where Bill lived on Fifth avenue. He kindly offered to share his room with me, but I was well situated and liked my fellow-boarders. Besides, I couldn't go over on to the avenue all at once. I would have to get there by easy stages. Bill says: "You mean a cab." Bill never will get through talking about Rube's first cab ride, or "Rube on the ahvnu hunting for Bill." He thinks he is an artist, but the pictures he draws of that ride would not be any sort of a guide for a detective if he were looking for me.

The accident had all but ruined my Sunday suit of clothes—the only one I had. The first thing, therefore, to do after I left the hospital was to get an entire new suit. Oh, how I did then wish for my own tailor at home! I could not find anything in the whole city to equal his "cut." In desperation I had to get some clothes like Bill wore, and I was a sight when I got them on! When I looked into the glass I had to have Bill introduce me to the fellow who looked back at me. I didn't know him, although Bill said it was myself. What made it so much worse was that as soon as I got the clothes on I had to get my hair cut—the first time for two or three years—and get a new hat and shoes. I don't know how I appeared to other people, but I certainly looked like a "sight" to myself. But, then, as people did not look at me any more, as they had at first, I began to think it might possibly be all right, but I could not help dreading the time when I would have to face my own tailor at home!

By sitting up late and getting up early, I soon got used to myself, and began to think a good bit of the "New Rube," epecially when the DeHertberns told Bill, after we had been there to see them, that "they had no idea that

Ruben was so fine-looking." I could not help feeling the compliment, even though I knew it was the clothes they were admiring all the time. I was finer looking in the old, but if they liked the new better I would be content.

I make it a point to always fulfill a promise. I had promised the great man I met the day I came to New York that when I found Bill I would let him know. I therefore wrote to him—this great man, the after-dinner speaker—that Bill and I had found each other, but that it was a question as to which of us had really done the finding. "At any rate," I wrote, "we are found, and are very happy." I told him I had had a number of adventures since the day I met him; wrote him a long letter, as he had been so sociable that day, that I knew he would be real glad to hear from me. When I told Bill all this he looked at me for a minute or two without saying a word. And then all he said was: "Rube, you will learn if you stay long enough! Do you suppose ——— ——— will remember even having seen you? No, Rube. He may remember the stories, but has long ago forgotten the teller of them." Well, the next day, when I got a letter from this great man, written by himself instead of by machinery, Bill looked at me for two or three more minutes, when I told him about it, then stopped short with: "Rube, you'll do; you'll get on in New York!"

"His Highness," as I called him, had not only remembered the "teller" of the stories, but had remembered his own promise, that he would invite me to a dinner that I might learn how after-dinner speaking was done. He said that the "Hilarious Sons of Kamskatka," of which country, among numerous others, he was a descendant, during a part of each winter season, would give a grand dinner on the following week, and that he had secured tickets for myself and a friend. "Would I come?"

He had a part of the alphabet in one corner of his letter, the bottom left-hand corner, "R. S. P. V." I could make out the first three without any trouble—"Rite Soon, Please," but the "V." I stopped on. I could not decide what he meant. I 'rote, however, at once, and when I saw Bill he said I had done just right, but would not tell me what the "V." meant—unless it was the price of the ticket." Bill had a way of saying these things. After a long while it occurred to me that he had said, when he invited me to come to New York: "Yes, Rube, come to the city. I will show you the sights, and have fun with you!" Was his manner of replying to me "having fun"? It made me think very carefully whenever I conversed with him, and he had very little "fun with me" after that. Bill is a good fellow, but he does see the "fun side" of life, if any man ever did. I used often to wonder if he could be a good business man, and yet be so fond of a joke. I only wondered, however, up to the day I first called on him in his office, why he was so cold and businesslike that when I started in on a joke he froze it solid right in the middle. I never yet have finished that joke nor even started one in his office since.

I invited Bill to go with me to the dinner, but he had an engagement for that evening. I then asked the Reporter, as Bill had told me that reporters never refuse a dinner. He accepted. He said he was used to dinners and would tell me how to act if I needed any instructions.

"In the first place, you will need a dress suit, which you can hire for the occasion. There are places in the city where you can hire a suit for one night or as long as you want it."

"You don't mean," said I, "that one man will wear a suit of clothes which perhaps a hundred other men have worn before, do you?"

"Oh, yes, that is very common."

"Well," said I, "it is too common for me. If I have to wear a dress suit and cannot wear my own, then I will not go out where dress suits are required." I might not need such a suit again in my life, but I was so set on going to the dinner of the "Hilarious Sons of Kamskatka" that I would go and have one made.

"But," said I, "it will be impossible to have it finished in time. The dinner is only one week off."

The Reporter seemed much amused at this, to me, insurmountable obstacle.

"Why, Rube," said he, "there are places in New York where you can order a suit one day and get it the next."

This was a revelation. My own tailor, at Highmont, would think he had done well to finish an ordinary suit of clothes in four weeks, but, then, much of his time is taken up with his barbering and horse doctoring.

I was quite busy after the suit came, trying it on, and getting used to it. I had never even seen a dress suit before, and felt so strange that I was sure I never could feel easy in it, but before the night of the dinner I was surprised how comfortable I felt. I was sure I would have difficulty in proving my identity to the great after-dinner speaker, as I looked no more like the Rube he saw than the old Kamskatkans did like their hilarious sons. When I am utterly at a loss to know how to describe anything, I make it a point not to describe it. This dinner was one of those "anythings." I was bewildered. I had never seen a dinner like it. It was not what there was to eat—for that matter, there was nothing like as much as Elenora has for an every Sunday dinner, but the decoration of the hall, the glare of lights, the music hidden away behind a bower of ferns and flowers, the elegant-looking men who surrounded the tables, and a hundred other points of interest that made it seem so strange to me. When all the tables were filled a large number of other gentlemen came in, but when I saw this last number carrying dishes and bottles, and helping those seated at the tables, I turned to the Reporter and asked him why they should do this, "Why are they not seated, too?" I asked.

When the Reporter had finished a smile which he had started in on at my question, he told me that this last number were the waiters.

"That cannot be," said I, "for see, they are wearing dress suits, too. Waiters do not dress like gentlemen, do they?"

"Oh, yes!" he said.

"Then tell me," I begged, "how can you tell the gentlemen from the waiters?"

"You cannot very well at the beginning of a dinner, but at the close, it is not at all difficult, as the sober ones are the waiters."

He also said: "This remark is not original, but original things are never looked for at dinners."

I was glad when the dining was over. It was the after-dinner part for which I had bought my dress suit.

The chairman said many good things, which the diners applauded most heartily. He was followed by a number of speakers, but every one seemed impatient to hear the great man of the evening, my friend on whose invitation I had come. He was applauded the moment his name was mentioned. He arose, smiling, and began talking so easy and went along so smoothly that I, who knew nothing of the art, could see why he was known as a great entertainer. It was when he began illustrating his points with stories that the company seemed in its best humor. Imagine my surprise, though, when I heard him relating my own stories, the ones I had told him the day he invited me into his house on Fifth avenue. They were mine, but so changed, in dress and locality, from the time I had heard old Uncle Dave Carter and Dave Stoner tell them, in Carter's tavern, that I would scarcely have known them if I had met them alone. A number of those around me seemed quite as surprised as I. One man at my right said, "That's the first time I ever heard him tell that story. I wonder where he got it!"

"Yes," said another, "I had remarked the same thing."

"It's the first time I've heard several of his stories. And do you notice, he tells them as though he knows they are new."

He kept the company so constantly engaged applauding that they must have been tired, in body but not in mind, by the time he had finished. He did talk so readily that after-dinner speaking just then seemed to me the easiest thing in the world to do. When he sat down the chairman arose and said: "Gentlemen, we have to-night with us a stranger from a neighboring State. He is, no doubt, unknown to most of you, save possibly by casual newspaper mention, but that matters little. Even the greatest among us were once unknown. We welcome to our city the young Pennsylvanian who is destined to make his mark in New York."

At this point I was glad to hear that there was another from my own State. I felt I must meet him, as somehow one loves his own people best when he is in another State, far from home.

"This young man is quite an original character, and is, moreover, a poet. Yes, gentlemen, a poet."

I was more desirous now than ever to meet him, for I always had a kindly feeling toward poets, as they do seem, by the newspaper writers, to have such hard lines in this world. Just then I saw, for the first time, Edward De-

Hertbern sitting behind the chairman. Even then it did not occur to me what was coming, and it was fortunate that I did not know, else I had not had the strength to get up, as I do get scared weak so readily. Those were my running thoughts as he talked.

"You will now be entertained by our young poet friend from Highmont, Pennsylvania, Mr. A. Ruben Hickenlooper; gentlemen, Mr. Hickenlooper."

I must have "lost my head," as they say, for I was up on my feet talking before I knew where I was or what I was doing, but once up, I would never back out.

"Gentlemen," I began, "I would, indeed, have to be a most original character to be able to respond to a call for an after-dinner speech at the first meeting of this kind I had ever heard of, much less attended. I came to-night to have my curiosity gratified. I came as a guest, not as a victim. I came to listen, not to talk. The chairman has spoken of me as a poet. His opinion is sadly at variance with that of my father. My father, a highly educated man for his locality, but whose education runs entirely in a prose direction, once said to me, 'Ruben, poets are of no use to the world. They are a shiftless, weak set. A poet is always poor. Rather than have a son of mine a poet, I would see him for the last time. I would feel like disinheriting him.' My reply was at least characteristic of a poet, if naught else. While a poet may not care what is said to him, he will never disclaim his muse. 'Father, do you not know that I write poetry?' The look that came over his face ought to have stopped me right there, but it did not. 'Yes,' I continued, 'I write poetry, quite pretty verse. I will show you a poem I have just completed. I am sure it will please you.' It was very fine. It was on 'The Raven Locks of Lily Ann,' a near-by neighbor's daughter. I brought the poem from the next room. He took it, looked it carefully through, smiled, and opened his arms. 'My son, my dear, dear son, Ruben; come to your father's arms.' I came quickly, oh, so pleased to think I had won him over, but no wonder, I thought—the poem was so fine. I got to his arms, but he kept right on talking when I thought he had quite finished. 'Yes, my boy, my own Ruben, that (he didn't name it, only called it "that"), lifts a load from my heart. It shows me that you are no poet, and never will be. I shall never disinherit you for poetical reasons.' My little heart was so crushed that the Muse did not dare look me in the face for a long while. When she did, my sister got the benefit. Anna was one of those sweet, gentle sisters, whom the small boy loves to go to with all his cares and joys. It was the 'joys' that took me to her on this one particular occasion. I had written another poem, written it and wept over some of the more pathetic verses. I did not dare show it to father, for this time I knew I would not get off, as I had before; this was a real poem—one of the disinheriting variety. No, father should not see this one. I would read it to Sister Anna alone. I did. I read it to her, or rather began it. I reached the third verse of the thirteen, when I saw a sadness come over the face of dear sister Anna. I knew the pathetic part was having its effect, but much sooner than I had expected.

" 'Brother Rube, dear brother Rube. Do you love me?' Gentlemen, I have heard that question many times since and under various circumstances, but it never sounded as it did then.

"I said: 'Yes, sister Anna, I do love you!' I did and do yet.

"She said, with tears trickling along down the sides of her voice:

" 'Well, Ruben, my sweet, kind brother, if you love me, and love me truly, please don't read any more of that stuff.' And yet, gentlemen, your chairman has introduced me to you as a poet. It will show you how little chairmen know about things in general, and poets in particular. Some of the stories told us this evening reminds me of——" and then I, having gotten started and warmed up by kindly applause, went on and told them a number of stories which I had, fortunately, not told to the great man. I never will know how I did it, but I talked in fairly good voice and without any hesitation or break from start to finish. When I was through, Edward came over and said he had only asked the chairman to call on me to see if I could even get on my feet.

"I had not the least notion of your being able to talk at all, much less make one of the best speeches of the dinner."

The great man came up while Edward and I were talking, and said he would have to look to his laurels or I would pluck them. As I had expected, he was greatly surprised at the change in my appearance. I thanked him.

"It shows," said I, "how great a speaker you are, that a boy newly arrived from a remote village could, by the inspiration of your words, be able to make his first after-dinner speech without failing from very fright."

The Reporter wrote up the dinner, and to compensate me for the invitation, I suppose, he spoke very well of my speech. I sent the paper, with the notice of it marked, to sister Anna. Bill said to me next day, that when Edward told at home about my speech, that Mr. DeHertbern remarked:

"Edward, Ruben must stay in New York." As usual, however, I cared more for what Helen said than for all the other compliments.

"Oh, Mr. Ruben, Edward said that you said you were not a poet, and you are a poet. Don't you know about that bad, good man what saved the little children? That was poetry, wasn't it? 'Course it was. And he said you told some awfully funny stories, and made everybody laugh all the time. He said he only had the man ask you to speak just to get a joke on you, but he said he was glad it was on him. My papa wants you to be a lawyer—won't you be a lawyer, Mr. Ruben?"

"I may some time, but not now. I will have to go back to the mountain country in a very little while, and I may never come back to New York, but I will often think of it."

"You don't mean never—never! You don't mean that you will go away off and not come back to see us in all your whole life? If you go away, I will make Edward or my papa take me to see you; then I can see Pauline and Evelyn May and the cousins. Oh, yes, and the big dogs and the rag doll, and I will make you come back to New York with me, cause you saved me, and now you are my Mister Ruben, and I won't let you stay in the mountains. Tousin Wallie says I am a little fairy, and you know little fairies make big men mind just what they tell them, if they don't, the little fairies just turn the big men into elephants. You don't want to be a big elephant, do you, Mister Ruben? Then you must not go back to the mountains."

"Why, Helen, you would not turn your Ruben into an ugly big elephant, would you?"

"I only mean for a little bit of a while, till you would say you would stay in New York. Oh, Mister Ruben, I don't want you to go away," and she was almost crying. So I told her I would not go away for a whole week.

"But, Mister Ruben, a week is such a little while. I want you to stay forever," and she could scarcely be induced to let me go, for fear, as she said, I would run away to the big mountains.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I see strange men, many of them. They bear the maiden away. They conduct the man and woman to the foot of the mountain.

Two very important things occurred that one remaining week of my stay in New York. Rather, Edward and I heard of them that week. Both of them were of vast import, as they changed the course of our two lives. Edward had from time to time received letters from Professor Blake, his hieroglyphical friend. The professor would often write a whole page of birds and figures for Edward to translate. He would consult with an old Egyptologist, whom he had met through the professor, and if there were parts he could not translate, this old man would read it for him. This last week of which I speak Edward received a long letter from the professor, who was then in Milan, Italy. He had been there but one week at the time, he wrote. "Here is a matter which may interest you," and then, instead of writing it as he should have done, he put it in hieroglyphics. He did not know how important it was to Edward, else he would have written it in the plainest of words rather than in the most difficult. Edward puzzled for a long while over it and could make out but little further than: "Have seen queen, tomb, beautiful, in Milan." He had to write this last word, as, of course, no sign could represent it. "What could he mean by 'queen,' 'tomb'?"

"I see, I see!" said Edward. "He has, as is his custom, been through the museums of Milan. The mummy of the beautiful queen of the tomb had been brought to that city and is now in one of its museums. Really, Ruben, this hieroglyphical writing is not all bad. It is like working out word puzzles. One word helps you on to another. Now look, Ruben. You see this figure? Well, it means 'queen'; but wait a moment. What word is this before 'queen'? It has the sign of the possessive, but what can that figure mean?" and he sat buried in deep thought. His eyes must have fallen to the bottom of the page, where the professor had signed his name, which he always did with "Your Friend." There was that same word, "Your." Edward seemed startled. "What! 'Your'—yes, it is: 'Your queen.' Ruben, what can he mean? But, then—no—that cannot be. He must mean that, as I was the first to find this mummy with him, he calls it mine, my queen. No, Ruben, he may claim the honor. I care not for it. My queen I will never find. She is lost to me forever." I would write the professor never again to say a word that would in the least way call up in Edward's mind the woman he had met in the strange tomb. Nothing I could do or say would bring him back to himself after one of these words had been spoken. On every other subject Edward was clear and remarkably bright and quick, but the moment his mind was called to the 'queen,' as he called her, that moment he was a changed being, and it was often days before he would be himself again. All this time, while I was thinking to write to the professor, Edward sat brooding over the letter. He suddenly started up. "Look, Ruben, look! Here is a word before the one which I know means 'beautiful.' What can it mean? It may be the key to the story. It is, Ruben, it is, for it means 'more.'

Oh, I see it all—all. If it is only true, the world for me will again have its brightness. It has been a dark world since I lost my queen. Listen, Ruben, here is what I learn: 'Have seen your Queen of the Tomb. Even more beautiful. In Milan.' 'More beautiful' can only apply to a living queen, and my friend knows that there is for me but one living queen, and he has seen her in Milan. I am wasting time. I will hurry to my old Egyptologist, and find if I have translated aright."

He was away but a short time. When he returned, his face wore a strange expression. His translation had in the main been correct, but the old scholar had made it smoother and even more plain, that the professor had seen the lady whom they had met in the tomb. This old man I had seen once with Edward, who had gone to him with some hieroglyphic writings. He was a strange man. His skin was almost like parchment. He was very old, he looked a hundred years, but his eyes seemed strangely penetrating and even brilliant. He seemed to look far away at times, as though he were reading things not yet known to us. On this last occasion, Edward told me, the old man was strangely impressed by the professor's letter. "When he had read it, he sat long and looked away off, as you know he does, Ruben, and, turning to me, he said: 'She is not in Milan now. I see her away in a deep mountain pass. A man and a woman are with her; the man has a military bearing. I see strange men, many of them. They bear the maiden away. They conduct the man and woman, bound, to the foot of the mountain. They release them, and when the man would turn back, as though to follow and bring back his child, the leader of the strange men, a powerful fellow, but with kindly manner, persuades him that it would be useless. The man and woman return in their carriage to Milan. I see a young man. He is going toward the mountain pass, as though to rescue the maiden.' At this point," said Edward, "the old man stopped, looked at me for fully a minute. There seemed almost sadness on his face as he looked away, shaking his head. Then he continued: 'The powerful fellow meets him; they fight with swords; the young man is slain, and—but all now is black. I see no more.' Nor could I get him to talk further. He would only say: 'I see nothing.'

"Ruben, a steamer sails to-morrow. I have cabled the Professor that I will go on it."

I tried to dissuade him. Tried to show him that the old man could not see any more into the future than we could, but all to no purpose. "Suppose, again," said I, "that he could read aright. Did he not as much as say that you would be slain by that powerful fellow?"

"Ruben, you do not know me. Did I know I would be slain, yet would I try."

He sailed the next day, as though to visit a friend in Milan, a count whom the DeHertberns had entertained at one time in their home.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A loan is even worse than a gift. A gift carries with it no hope of a return, whilst a loan dishonors the man who fails to repay it.

It was now the evening before I was to go back to my home. I would change from the never-ceasing noise and hurry of New York to the quiet, peaceful solitude of the mountains, where, no doubt, I would remain, a good, law-abiding citizen, for the rest of my years. My friends in the city would think of me for a while, and then forget even my name. Little Helen might cry herself to sleep a few nights, as for a favorite pony gone, but her heart would soon go on loving some other creature. Young hearts so soon forget. I would not forget. The life of solitude, which I must hereafter live, would have so little in it of a pleasant nature, that each moment of my stay in the city would be a picture fixed indelibly on my memory. And often in the after days I would turn to those pictures, as a mind relief from the prosaic drudgery of a farmer's life. Bill, whose life work was laid out before him, would remain in New York. In two years he would marry Beatrice, and become one of the great firm of De-Hertbern & Co. I might even visit him, but no return to New York would ever be like my first remembrance of it. I could never take another "first cab ride," the full length of Fifth avenue, hunting for that avenue; the museums of the Bowery—aye, the Bowery itself—would be an old story. The friends of the boarding-house would all be scattered and gone, leaving only my memory of them, and no others would ever be like my first friends there. I would never again meet with an accident under such pleasant auspices. Helen might be a grown young lady on my return, and grown young ladies had never cared for me. She might look upon me as a vague dream of childhood, or, at most, as Bill's friend. No, this last night of my first sojourn among the friends and the pleasures of New York would to a great extent end all the real joys of the city. No after visit would be the same. I would ever compare it with my first, and subsequent visits always lose by comparison. At times, during this retrospect, I would ask myself: Has this visit been a profitable one to me? Would not my life have been a happier one had I not known the joys of this new existence? Would not the mountain home of my boyhood, which had ever seemed bright, with nothing to contrast it with, seem dull and lonely? Would not the good but commonplace friends of Highmont lose by my knowledge of a people wholly different from them by reason of superior advantages? Would not the laughing brooks babble on less musically to my ear than they had of yore? Would not the once great things of Highmont lose all their greatness now? Aye, my brain was in a whirl. I thought, and yet could think no thought to a conclusion. I fain would cease trying to solve the problem. I would go back to the old home, and make the best of the life I would have to lead there. I would think of the new friends, and try to go on loving the old. I would try to show them no change. I would do my duty as I saw it, and at the end lie down in the old church-yard, and be forgotten with the rest.

Bill and I were due at the DeHertberns for dinner. I sat so long in thinking over my home-going that I had but little time to dress before he would call for me. I was getting all the good out of my dress suit that I could, as I would have no use for it at Highmont. Bill would not let me wear it except in the evening, else I had gotten more good out of it. In some ways, I used to think, Bill had peculiar notions, but in the end I found he had learned much.

That dinner was the most agreeably sad one I have ever sat down to. The more I enjoyed myself, the worse I felt. Agreeable from their kindly manner toward me, and sad in thinking it was the last I might partake with them. Mr. DeHertbern, ever courteous, had never shown the same consideration for me before. I could not but think that he must respect me for the refusal to accept his offer of a course in law school. I scarcely expected him to speak of it, but he did.

"Ruben," said he, "no doubt you will wonder that I again refer to my wish that you should take a course in law, but I cannot allow you to throw away an opportunity to enter the one field for which I think you so well fitted. Had you the means, I would not have offered to assist you, but when I could so easily gratify a wish, and at the same time help you to attain your own desire, I felt almost as though you had done me a wrong in refusing. Now, Ruben, I respect you more than I can tell, and I would not urge you further, but I have thought that you might possibly accept my offer as a loan, to be returned at a future time. That will not be accepting money as a gift."

"Mr. DeHertbern," I replied, "a loan is even worse than a gift. A gift carries with it no expectation of a return, whilst a loan dishonors the man who fails to repay it. Should I accept the loan, and for some reason, possibly one which I could not govern or control, be unable to give it back, it would make my life far more unbearable than a life buried away among the stony hills of Highmont. There would be no pleasure in life for me to feel I owed that which I could not pay. The debt might be forgiven, but the humility I would feel most deeply. If I could tell you how much I prize your offer you would not feel hurt at my refusal of it." I shall not forget the strange look he gave me, but he never again reverted to the subject.

When the dinner was over we went into the music-room, all save Mr. DeHertbern, who went up to the library. It seemed so pretty to see Mrs. DeHertbern seated at the piano, playing accompaniments for Beatrice and Bill. I was pleased to hear how beautifully they sang together. Their voices blended in the sweetest harmony. They sang many songs, but there was one I have so often thought of since. I only remember the last verse and chorus. I am not even sure I have the right name, but I have always called it

"PRETTY MOTH."

"Be content with your lot
Pretty one, pretty one,
And make use of the joys given you;
Do not strive to gain wealth or fame,
Pretty one.
If no pleasures they bring unto you,
Then take all with joy
That you find on life's path,
And be thankful, though always not bright.

Chorus.

"For many things in this world
That look bright, pretty moth,

Only dazzle to lead us astray.
Many things in this world
That look bright, pretty moth,
Only dazzle to lead us astray."

It made me feel almost resigned to my having to leave New York. I had seen a good deal of "dazzle" in this great city, and it was possibly well that I was going away.

Helen had not left my side all the evening. Just before we sat down to dinner she had whispered to me that if I asked her mamma she "might let her eat with the big people, just this once." She promised to be the "goodest girl" and not to "talk even a little bit." It seemed really odd to watch her during the whole dinner. She was quiet the longest time I had ever before known her to be—and it wasn't a relief to me, either. She made up for it after we had gone into the music-room. When the singing had ceased, and Bill and Beatrice were seated for a game of chess, Mrs. DeHertbern looking on, Helen said: "Oh, Mr. Ruben, I am so tired being still, when I wanted to talk every little minute. Tousin Wallie says you are really and truly going away to-morrow forever and ever. I am on'y a little girl, but I know that means a long, long time. Will I be big like Beatrice when that time comes to the end?"

"I do not know, Helen, how long it will be. I may never come to the city again. You must not feel bad when I go. You can play with your pretty dollies and go driving in the park, and soon forget about Ruben." When I said this, trying to divert her mind, as though my going was of little importance, it had the other effect. She almost screamed out crying. Her mother ran to her with: "Helen, what can be the matter?"

"Oh, mamma, mamma, Mr. Ruben said I would forget him when he goes away, when he saved me and got hurted hisself. I can never, never, never forget him, mamma; can I, mamma! No, Mr. Ruben, I will be your Helen forever and ever, and will never forget you!" And as she threw her little, chubby arms about my neck she cried: "I will love you always," and would scarcely let go when her mother insisted that it was getting late for her and that she must now bid Ruben good-by.

"Must you go, Mr. Ruben? Won't you stay and be a lawyer? Papa and brother Edward want you to so much, for I hear them talking about you." I could argue with men, but the pleadings of this little child made me helpless. I could not reply. All I could say was: "Good-by, Helen. Ruben will never forget you."

Mr. and Mrs. DeHertbern and Beatrice were very kind in their wishes for my success when bidding me good-by. "Remember now, Ruben," said Mr. DeHertbern, "if ever you need a friend, under any and all circumstances, you must feel free to call on me! Will you promise me?"

"I do promise most heartily, and thank you for your wish for my welfare."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Poor old Shylock! The only praise ever accorded him, when he is gone, is the epitaph found on his tomb, at which all smile as they pass. He may die rich, but seldom mourned.

No doubt the reason of my fear of money obligations was what I had seen at home. Father, always ambitious to own the largest farm of any one in the county, had added one piece after another, until his ambition had reached its goal. He did not own it, although everybody knew it as his. He went heavily in debt in order to secure the land. As long as the crops were good he kept up his interest and reduced the principal, but for three years the crops had regularly failed. The interest on the notes could not be met and the taxes were far over due. The man who held father's notes for thousands of dollars was one of those careful, judicious men found in almost every community. He starts on nothing. of which fact he is so fond of boasting, and from that "nothing" grinds out, not only many a dollar of the hard-working farmer, but often the life of the farmer himself. This modern Shylock does not begin the grinding until the "grist" is as large as it will grow.

"Take your time. I do not need the money. Why, I have saved up, and can loan you another thousand, if any accommodation."

He knows to the very dollar the limit of his victim. He will not go one dollar beyond that limit. He is then "very sorry," but he "must have the money!" When he dies, which is seldom young, he always has a large funeral, everybody attends, that there may be no error as to the depth of the grave. The only praise ever accorded him when he is gone is the epitaph found on his tomb, at which all smile as they pass. He may die rich, but seldom mourned.

Father was in the grasp of a characteristic member of this class of men.

Knowing that the three hundred dollars which I had saved up would go into the "grist" if I gave it to father, I felt I would at least have one "good time" in my life. For that reason I had spent my money freely for one who had not yet acquired the art.

I sat long into the night, thinking of the change the morrow would bring to me. The morrow came, but a far different change it brought from the one I knew of. I was going home. I would settle down to the quiet life of a farmer, and the life of the city would be but a memory. I was resigned, but I was not happy. I had tasted of the city, and it was pleasing. The life of the country was endurable, but that was all. The morrow brought a letter from sister Anna, and that letter bore the change of my life. Wonderful! It read like the dream of an Aladdin. Could it be true, or was I in a dream myself? Listen to the words it bore:

"Oh, Ruben, I fear almost to tell you, as it may not be true. It is too good to be true. You know our old barren farm? Well, Aunt Racheal gave us far more than she ever dreamed of. She gave us a fortune. Some men came to see you the other day, and, not finding you, they said they were looking for a farm. Would we sell the old Darnell farm? 'It is not of any value, but we can fix it up and use it as a hunting preserve.' Now, I knew it was of no use for that. The creek that ran through it might do for trout fishing, but for hunting it was not suitable. I spoke to father about it, and told him the reason the men gave for wanting it. The reason was so poor that father at once became suspicious. You know reports have been flying ever since oil was discovered in the State. One locality after another has 'just struck oil.' It had not yet reached our county. Father, not wishing to discourage them away, said that you owned a half interest, and that he would write you, and if they would come again in a week he would give them an answer. They seemed greatly disappointed, and before they left they made an offer for us to 'think over,' as they said. The offer was so far beyond the value of the land that father was certain there must be something beside scrub oak and blackberry bushes on it. He drove at once to the old farm, and found a number of men going up and down the creek. They were so intent on what they were doing that they did not see him, although he got almost up to them in the underbrush. One of them said: 'There are all indications of oil! Now, if we can buy the old place before that boy and girl know what's here, it will be a great bit of business.' Father turned and came away without their seeing him. I would have written you at once, but I did not wish to encourage you until we were certain. Since the day they called on me no less than four different men and parties of men have been here, and each time I am offered a higher price, until I am utterly bewildered. Oh, I know not what to do. Oh, Ruben, if we only had some good expert to go over the farm and find what it is worth, it would help to determine what to do. As it is, the sums offered have increased so fast that there is no way for us to tell its true value. I do not want what it is not worth, but we should get near its value. You had better come home at once, as this matter is far more important than New York, with Bill and Fifth avenue thrown in."

She was so filled with the oil question that every margin of her letter was taken up with it, and not a word about anything else. As soon as I had read the letter I went at once to see Mr. DeHertbern, who, I knew, was in some way connected with a company that dealt in oil. When I got to his office Bill told me that he was at that moment in the oil company's office, where they were holding a meeting, at which a man from Pennsylvania was to make a report on a great "find" that had just been made. I was so excited that I could not wait for Mr. DeHertbern to return, but, learning from Bill where this oil company's office was located, I went directly to it. The meeting was just being called as I arrived. Mr. DeHertbern seemed pleased to see me and invited me into the meeting-room, explaining to some of the directors that I was a young friend of his. Little did either of us think of the result of that meeting. Preliminaries were quickly gone through and the "oil find" was taken up. The Pennsylvanian proved to be the greatest expert on oil lands that this company had.

"My attention," he began, "was called to this property by some well men who are continually hunting out new fields. Their description of the property was so glowing that I went at once to look at it, and I found it even better than they had reported."

"Did you find who owns it?" asked the chairman.

"Yes; it belongs to an old man, but he will not sell. At any rate, every time he is approached he puts off the well men with some excuse—says his son and daughter own it. But these men always have a way of getting what they want. They soon found that the old man was heavily involved on account of having gone in debt for more farms than he needed. Well, the day I left, the holder of a claim for thousands of dollars against him, began suit, and, as they told me, 'we will soon be in a position to negotiate with you!' They offered the old man a price far beyond the value of the old farm, but now they say, since this suit has begun, they can get it much cheaper. Of course, I do not uphold getting property below value, but these well men are too important to us for me to oppose them, so I have to let them have their own way. I have examined the property very carefully, and find, if we can get it for"—and here he mentioned a price ten times greater than sister Anna had told me the men had offered her.

I sat there as one in a dream. I knew what was being said, but I could not realize that I was hearing old Aunt Racheal's homestead talked about in connection with anything of value. What saddened me was to hear that old Shylock had begun suit against father. I would go home and fight the suit as long as possible, in the hope that I could find another buyer for the land, or induce the well men to increase their offer. What I had learned in that meeting I could not use. I had been admitted as a trusted guest, as Mr. DeHertbern's friend, and, moreover, I could not now tell him about sister Anna's letter. Oh, how I wished I had not gone to that meeting. After the expert had finished his report but little more was done, and they left the room. I said nothing about what I had come to say, but bid Mr. DeHertbern good-by.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Father urged me not to take so foolhardy a risk, that I had no knowledge of law. At this I whispered: "Neither has the jury."

I left New York that night and reached Highmont the next day, the stage getting into the village at noon. The family were all so disheartened over the coming trial that they gave me a very poor welcome.

"Ruben," said sister Anna, "to think that what we had looked upon as a great fortune is now to be our ruin. Since old Shylock began his suit on the notes the men who made us the offer now say it was too high, and, in fact, they think they can find another place that will answer their purpose better. We have told them that we would accept the offer, as I knew you would agree to anything that will save dear father in his old age; but they say: 'No, we are not altogether pleased with the farm. It is too remote. It is too barren; not enough forest on it for hunting purposes. In short, we hardly care for it, but will see later on about it.'

"And, Ruben, old Shylock is hurrying up the trial all he can. His lawyers, the best in the county, have gotten from the judge nearly all they asked for. He has pushed the trial away forward on what he calls the calendar. Father's one lawyer (all he can afford, and a poor one at that, as old Shylock had secured the four good ones in the county before we knew of the trial) has done what he could, but the judge never hears him talking if any one of the other four have a word to say, and every time our lawyer wants to be heard at least two of them are up with: 'May it please your honor!' and, Ruben, it always 'pleases his honor' not to notice little Bennie, as people call our counsellor. Oh, Ruben, what will we do? The old home will be sold, and, as nobody will bid against Shylock, he will get all for less than the face of the judgment he cannot but get in the coming trial, leaving nothing for us."

This was the situation when I came home from my pleasure trip to New York. I found how true the saying: "The greatest joy and the greatest sorrow are closely allied." If you see the first, look around, and the second will soon be along. Never had I had as much joy in all my life as I had seen on this visit to Bill, and never was there such a prospect of sorrow as now.

I was not one to sit down and bewail at my fate. My nature was to fight better as the "under man." I soon found that "Bennie" was well named. He was well enough learned in the law; in fact, he had been the medal man of his class, but my opinion of medal men by this time was very poor indeed. As I said, he was well learned in the law, but he had no fight in him. He knew what to say, but he had no force. A jury seldom thinks of what a lawyer says, but how he says it. I once saw a trial in Highmont where this was proven true most conclusively. The law provides that "if an animal is found on the highway unattended by a caretaker the fine for the same shall be 75 cents. If the animal shall do any damage to field crops, said damage shall be assessed and the animal held until paid by the owner of such animal." I am not a law-book writer; that is why the above is not put in exact legal phrase, but you will note that I used "said" and "same," which will in a great measure excuse the remainder. Well, to proceed with the story in question: "Hen" Titer's cow, usually a quiet "baste," did get on the highway—75 cents—and did get into farmer Crumley's cornfield, and did eat and destroy \$4.12½ worth of corn—\$4.87½ in all. This amount "Hen" Titer by law must pay. "Hen" called for a jury trial, and, by a strange fate, every one of the jurymen was a farmer. It was to their interest to make an example of "Hen" Titer; but "Hen" would say nothing but: "Wait till Id (Ed ——— was his lawyer) gits at thim. He is the bye (boy) that will make thim furgit their own grandmithers." And he did. The picture that Ed drew of the poor Titer children crying for their milk while that monster, Crumley, held in durance vile "Hen's" cow was one of the most pathetic appeals I have ever heard. I cried—I couldn't help it. I felt excused, though, for every juryman was doing the same thing. Verdict: Crumley was fined \$5 and costs for taking up the cow.

While in New York I used occasionally to attend court to hear the lawyers argue cases. What I noticed of most common occurrence was that if a lawyer knew but little law he would devote much time telling the judge "I object," and if the judge would overrule he would then "note an exception," in the hopes that when somebody higher up who did know the law, would by some chance find that his "objections" were well taken and the decision of the judge reversed. At any rate, I would have Bennie "object" from start to finish in this trial. We would delay everything we could. Bennie knew a good deal but nothing he knew was truer than that "If you have a poor case delay. Delay helps the man who has no case, and often hurts the one with the best case." Yes, we would delay—that is, we thought we would delay, but the judge wasn't that kind of a judge. Bennie told me that Old

Shylock always loaned this judge all the money he needed, and as he spent a good deal of time at the taverns in the different towns where he held court, he must have needed a considerable. It always occurred to me that who ever had the contract for furnishing the fuel for that judge's nose, need not look for many other contracts, but I used to feel sorry for the man who had to pay for this contract, until Bennie told me he thought old "Shy" paid most of it. No, we did not delay. The trial was pushed faster than any trial had ever before been pushed in the county.

The opening day was almost like a county fair. My father was well known for a long distance around Highmount, and while everybody had respected him in his prosperous days, it was curiosity rather than respect which brought them together at the trial.

The twelve men were soon impaneled—whenever Bennie suggested a man of any intelligence one of the other lawyers would object. "Objection sustained;" and when on the other hand, Shy's lawyer would name some ignorant fellow Bennie would object. "Objection overruled," then the "gavel" would fall. Well, Bennie may have been too sarcastic, but he spoke of it as a "typical American jury." I cannot tell my readers of the outside world what this jury looked like, as they would only know by some comparison, and I can think of nothing with which to compare it. While as for those of my little inside world, I need not tell them, for they were all there and know for themselves.

Sister Anna told me that she saw two of the men who had offered to buy our farm. She pointed them out to me. I watched them, and saw them standing near the jury box. They would say something to nearly every one of the jurors as they would walk up to take their seats.

I told Bennie to object, but he did it so weak-voiced that I don't think the judge heard him. At any rate, he said nothing and the men continued to smile at and talk to the jurors.

Country trials are much like those in the city—they are long or short as the purse is long or short.

Shylock having four lawyers on his side meant a trial long enough for each one to earn his money.

As for Bennie, he was not taken into account. He would have to stay as long as the four chose to keep him.

The trial was on its second day—nothing had been done further than selecting the jury, and the case opened by the leader of Shylock's four lawyers.

He said nothing about the case. He spent the whole two hours of his speech in telling the "intelligent" jury what he knew about Blackstone and the principles of law and jurisprudence. Those of them who were awake at the time he finished seemed greatly pleased, whether with the speech or that it had closed I never could tell.

The next lawyer told the jury what he knew of the obligation of debtor to creditor, and cited a number of cases beginning at Hasdrubal and running on down through past Napoleon and Wellington. The other two lawyers followed in the same line of argument.

The trial had so far been conducted without any semblance of law. Bennie had "objected," "taken exceptions," was overruled, sat upon, laughed at by the Court until our side seemed in a desperate situation.

"May it please the Court," I began, after the four lawyers had all made their speeches. I could get no further for "Hear! Hear!" from all parts of the court room, drowned even the raps of the old judge.

Finally, when the room was again silent, I continued:

"If your honor please, and the four worthy gentlemen who have spoken so learnedly do not object, I would ask that I may be permitted to say a few words to help our one lone counsellor."

The judge smiled, the four lawyers said it was entirely no difference to them. So it was agreed that I might speak in place of Bennie. Father urged me not to take so foolhardy a risk, that while I might be heard further than Bennie, I had no knowledge of the law.

At this I whispered to him, "neither has the jury." I had dressed for the occasion. I laid my city suit away, and donned one of my own tailor's. The very novelty of the situation aided me. The court room was packed with people, most of whom had known me from childhood. I was all alone. Against me was the judge, and four of the best lawyers in the county had spoken to a jury of their own selection. As is often the case, in their anxiety to get everything, they had gotten too much. I knew several of the jury. Some of them were under obligations to my father; two or three of the others were sons of men who had once been in good circumstances, but had lost their all in almost similar cases with ours. Especially was this true of the foreman. When a young man his future was a bright one, but a suit at court, quite similar to this one of ours, had swept away every vestige of their home. His father died from grief, and he had never recovered his spirits enough to get above the life of a common laborer.

Again the four lawyers in their effort to show their legal knowledge, had all talked over the heads of these jurymen. I knew that, while I might not be versed in the law, I could reach these men through a better channel—one that they knew more about—the arrogance of the rich and the ills of poverty. I began, in slow, measured sentences:

"Your honor and gentlemen of the jury, you see before you a boy with no knowledge of the law. You have known me from childhood. You know the advantages I have had and know that I am not armed to fight this unequal battle with the giants of the bar; but, gentlemen of the jury, when a boy is fighting for the gray haired father and mother whose lives he prizes far above his own, then he is armed with a weapon against which the sharp blade of legal learning has no force.

"You have been most ably told by these four giants of the bar the meaning of words, the certain fine turns which can be made with words. Aye, gentlemen, some of us know too well how that words can be turned to our destroying. Who knows better their uses than the money-lender? He seeks out his victim, who is a man in prosperous condition. He throws around him a spell of low, sweet-sounding words and urges him to accept money at a fair rate of interest. Once the spell is around the victim, and no power on earth can break it. He is led on and still further on. As the bonds become more firmly tightened, the rate of interest increases. But, gentlemen, this Shylock knows when to stop the use of soft words. It is when he has in his grasp the victim. His words now change—their soft, flute-like tones become more terrible than those of the thunder. The poor victim fights on and on the unequal battle, but he seldom wins. The struggle often ends with not only his fortune gone, but his life. The Shylock looks upon his death struggle, and with his coffers swelled out with the hard-earned dollars of his victim, says to the widow and orphaned children: 'I will rent you the homestead cheap!'" (This, I saw, had its effect on the foreman, who seemed to catch every phase of my meaning.) "The work of the modern Shylock does not end with the death of his victim. It often follows on down through to his children, changing their whole lives, and making them slaves where they should be masters."

Up to this point the lawyers had attempted many times to stop me, but the more they opposed, the more fire I threw into my pleading. I saw I had the jury nearly all with me, and I would turn in another direction.

"Who is the Shylock and who the victim in this case? The wrecked homes of the one are all over our country—the kind acts of the other are known to all who have ever needed a helping hand. Gentlemen of the jury, it is for you to say if another home shall mark the trail of Shylock! It may not be known to you all that this trial was timed for a purpose. Had it been deferred, as was promised, Shylock would have had his money and his interest; but that was not what he wanted. That was not for what he had used soft words. Gentlemen of the jury, what he wanted was the very roof that covers our heads. Shall he have that roof?"

"No, no!" from all parts of the room. The judge stands up to rap order; the four lawyers turn uneasily in their seats; old Shylock is out in the vestibule walking back and forth, pale and nervous; several of the jury are wiping their eyes.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I hold in my hand the proof of most glaring usury on the part of Shylock. I may not know all the fine turns of legal wording, but I do know that usury is a very grave offense." I had said enough, and had but to close. "And now, gentlemen of the jury, friends and neighbors, I have done. I have told you no law. I know no law. I do know, however, that if Shylock adds another victim to his number this day that a grave injustice will be done to an honest man."

The court-room was in an uproar, and for many minutes the judge could not be heard. He charged the jury, but they seemed not to hear him. They were sent out, and soon returned with a verdict in favor of my father. How or on what grounds they could have done so, no one knew, nor could they explain it; but, as Bennie said, they were a "typical American" jury.

Friends gathered around and warmly congratulated me. Father and mother embraced me and wept. But imagine my wonder and surprise when before me stood Bill and Mr. DeHertbern.

"Ruben, nothing in the world can now stand between you and the law. You need not borrow nor accept a gift, for you are in your own right a rich man. Our expert reports the true value of your farm, and I am prepared to close the matter at once." And that very day Bennie drew the papers.

We were to receive a certain sum in cash, which seemed in itself several fortunes. We were to receive another amount in certificates in the oil company, and a further royalty per barrel for all the oil taken from the property. The next day I sent for old Shylock, and when we had counted the just amount due him, Mr. DeHertbern gave him a check in full payment. It took only a very small part of the cash due us. The old man for once in his life wept. Bennie thought it was for joy at receiving anything, after the verdict of the "typical," etc.

It was a happy reunion at our old home that night. Bill and his mother were there, and Mr. DeHertbern was to stay over to look at the oil property. I was most curious to know how Bill and Mr. DeHertbern had reached there just at that time. Bill told me that his mother, who had been West, reached home a day or two before the trial. She wrote at once and told him the serious trouble we were in, and how that nothing could save our home. "Oh, how I wish we could help them!" she wrote. Well, when Bill got the letter he showed it to Mr. DeHertbern. They found that by starting at once they could catch the stage in time. They reached the court-room just as I was beginning my speech, and I was greatly pleased to know that they had heard it, for when one does himself fair credit one likes to have his friends hear him.

It was a most joyous week that followed the end of the trial. From sorrow to joy, from threatened poverty to riches beyond the dream of—to me—Crœsus. Success makes many friends. Wherever I went, I was met with congratulations, both on the result of the trial and my change from penury to wealth. Possibly nothing that had ever occurred in Highmont created so great a sensation as our trial. I have made many speeches since that day. I have spoken in the highest courts of the land, and before the most learned judges; but the one great speech of my life was that I made when an unlearned boy before an ignorant jury in a mountain village court-room. That speech is talked of to this day among the people of Highmont. Their good opinion is sweeter to my heart than the applause of a nation.

Mr. DeHertbern remained two days. He drove over to the Darnell farm with his expert, and was greatly pleased with the prospect. Work was at once begun on its development, and it proved a success far beyond their anticipations. The wells are still producing, and our royalty turns in to Sister Anna and me a large yearly income.

On the day of my arrival from New York almost the first person I met was a poor widow whose daughter Maggie had run away from home four years before. This poor mother had never heard from her child in all this time. She had hoped on that Maggie would return, or that she would send some word to tell her that she was yet alive. "Oh, Mr. Ruben! have you seen, in the great city, my little Maggie? Nobody has ever seen her. My heart is breaking, thinking of her. Oh, she must come back to me some time! She was all I had in the world. The life of the very poor has little joy in it, but when I had my child with me I did not think of poverty. I thanked the Lord and was happy; but when she went away without a word to me, I have never seen a happy moment since. Mr. Ruben, I did hope you might have seen her, and that you could have told her how her poor old mother is always waiting for her to come back."

The sorrow and trouble of others affect me deeply. If I can speak a word of cheer or help them in their grief, I always try to do so; but I could do nothing for this poor woman. Nothing I could do or say would bring Maggie home to her mother, and nothing but Maggie's return could lift the burden from her lonely life. Before I returned to the city, Sister Anna had promised to quietly see that this poor woman should never want for anything.

Pauline and Evelyn May never got tired listening to my story of Helen. They would ask over and over: "Brother Ruben, tell us again about Helen. Will she some time come to see us? Wouldn't we have fun! We would let her paddle in the little brook, and ride on the big wagon, and—and——"

"Yes," broke in Evelyn May, "and get stinged with the bees!"

"Oh, wouldn't it be fun! Brother Ruben, won't you bring her to see us some time?"

"Yes, if her mamma will let her come I will bring her;

but she is always afraid Helen will get hurt, and is very careful of her."

"Why, Brother Ruben, she mustn't be 'fraid if she is with you. You never will let her get hurt!" And they never ceased planning what they would do when Helen came. Not for a moment could they be made to think she might not come.

As soon as I was no longer needed at home, I returned to New York; as now, with nothing to prevent, I would begin my cherished study of the law.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

They buy their music as they would their coal, weighing it out on the same heavy scale. In Europe music is a pleasure—in America it is a commodity.

The day Edward DeHertbern reached the other side he sent a cablegram and a telecablegram on his safe arrival in Milan, Italy. Wire food is never satisfying to the mind, and it was only when I received a letter from him that I was at all relieved from the strain of very natural worry.

Edward wrote: "I have seen the Professor. My translation of his letter was correct. I have met Lord and Lady Alleyn, who do not recognize me as the embarrassed youth they met in the tomb. They know me only as Count Drasco's friend. They are almost distracted with grief, as what the old Egyptologist told me is true. Their daughter was stolen from them by a band of bandits. Lord Alleyn has offered a large ransom, but word was sent him that, 'We will name the ransom in due time.'

"In time of action Professor Blake is a very child. He has no plan, can suggest no way by which we can be of service to the stricken father and mother in their grief. I have found my friend, Count Drasco, and have told him my story. This man when in New York had seemed so gentle—almost timid, that I feared he would be of small service in time of strong, quick action; but, Ruben, I had never before been so mistaken in my estimate of a man as I had been in the Count. The favorite of the drawing-room, the gentle-mannered man of fashion, became a very giant in time of need. He entered at once with me in devising a means of rescuing Miss Alleyn. Said he: 'This is a most delicate hazard. We dare use no force, and yet must needs be prepared to fight on occasion. If she be in the power of the bandits, they, by long custom, have learned all the ways of attempted rescue. If force sufficient be sent, these men, who have lost all human feeling by long years of preying on their fellow men, would kill her rather than that she be taken. Only by means of which these bandits know nothing can we hope to succeed. We will dress as becomes most humble strolling minstrels. Ah! but there we will fail. You Americans are not musical. You have, you all claim, a great love for music; but you do not know true music. The strolling minstrel of our mountains often has more music in him than you will find in one of your so-called music schools. When I was in your country I heard much that pleased, but all the musicians were foreigners. None of your ladies sang. I heard no voice in your drawing-rooms save that of the professional who sang for pay. No, this plan will not do; although it is the best that could be devised were you a singer, or could play the guitar.'

"Ruben, I felt the criticism most keenly. America is not advancing in music. Our people feel that it is taking a lowly position to play or sing for their guests. They buy their music as they would their coal, weighing it out on the same heavy scale. In Europe music is a pleasure—in America it is a commodity. I could but think of the long months—yes, even years—I had spent trying to learn music, for I love it as few Italians love it;

and when I thought of my old music teacher, Professor Frenchelli, and how that he used to tell me that my Italian accent was perfect, and that my voice was as pure as an Italian minstrel, I could not help saying:

" 'Count, I have studied your music, and play somewhat on the guitar.' He smiled, and reached me that instrument without a word. The moment I touched the chords he was all animation, and when I sang a simple little Italian ballad which Professor Frenchelli always said I sang well, the Count was almost beside himself with pleasure.

" 'It is the way—the very best. See! our voices blend together in soft minstrel melody, in plaintive song;' and he joined me in the ballad, which he knew. I, too, was surprised at his fine voice.

" 'I will not be so critical,' said he, 'on the swordsmanship of America until I have seen what you can do in sword play.' At that he took down two keen blades from where they hung in his room, and handing me one, took position as though to fence. A very few passes convinced him that he was no match for my skill. He was even more delighted than he was at my voice.

" 'Perfect! Perfect!'

" 'But what is the good,' I asked, 'of being able to use a sword, if we dress the part of a minstrel? We cannot go armed, as a minstrel carries no weapon.' He took down a guitar and handed it to me to examine.

" 'What,' asked he, 'do you see peculiar about this instrument?' I took it, looked it over carefully, played upon it, returned it with, 'I see nothing further than that it has a peculiarly formed head, and that the back of the instrument is somewhat differently shaped; but I would not have noted any difference had you not called my attention to it.'

"'See!' said he; and with a quick movement he had grasped the peculiar head of the guitar and stood in front of me, armed with a sword. That peculiar head was a sword-hilt, and the back of the guitar was the sheath.

"'No one would suspect this innocent-looking guitar as an instrument of death, and yet you see the blade is a perfect sword.' So great was my surprise that I could make no reply.

"'There is but one other guitar like this, and it is owned by a man who is my enemy. I have no means of gaining possession of it, as he prizes it above money. He thinks his the only one of the kind in the world. He knows nothing of this one.'

"While I knew that time was valuable, I also felt I must gain possession of that other instrument. I learned from the Count who owned it. I left him and went direct to our Consul, who, I was surprised to find, knew my father well. He was a young man about my own age. His face and frank manner made me feel I could fully trust him. I told him my story. He entered into our plan most heartily, and when I spoke of the other instrument and gave him the name of the owner, he smiled and told me to call this evening and he would have something to my interest. I returned to the home of the Count and found he had secured two well-worn minstrel suits. Ruben, could you see me as I sit here dressed in mine, you would not know me. I do not recognize myself in the mirror. The Count says, 'We look our character.'

"In my interview with Mr. and Mrs. Alleyn this forenoon I learned as much of the particulars of the abduction of their daughter as they could give; as nearly as they could describe the place, the character of the deep cut or pass in the mountain where their carriage was stopped, the number of the men, their dress, and how they were armed. Much was vague to them, as it was all done so quickly that they could not note minutely all the circumstances.

"What had impressed them more than anything else was the character of the leader. They described him almost exactly as the old Egyptologist had pictured him to me. A man of powerful build, with a face that showed no mercy. I could not tell them the full depth of interest I felt in their daughter, nor that I was about to attempt her rescue, but I did counsel them to make no terms until they again heard from me. I have said nothing to Professor Blake as to my intentions. He would be sure to do or say that which might frustrate our plans. I have given your name and address to the Consul. If anything should happen to me, he will notify you promptly.

"Later. I have been again to the Consul's. How, or in what manner, he would not inform me, but he has secured the guitar which I so much coveted. We are almost ready to start. Just now when I described the leader of the bandits to the Count he seemed greatly moved.

" 'Why,' said he, 'he must surely be Lougi Amabilli, on whose head the Government has an offer of 25,000 francs! He has friends all through the mountains. The reward has no effect. He goes and comes among the villages, and no one interferes. I have heard say he is a great favorite, as he spends money with a free hand. His sword has caused many deaths—they cannot be called murders, as he always fights fair. Men who excel are ever credited as greater than they are. This may be true with Amabilli, but he is said to be the best swordsman in all northern Italy.'

"Ruben, this was not pleasing to hear, when what the old seer told me is ever running in my mind. If you never hear from me again, do not think that for a moment there was a single regret for what I am about to attempt——"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Gold! A mine of it could not keep you behind that iron door!"

"WAS HE AN AMERICAN? A YOUNG TOURIST FOUND DEAD FROM A SWORD THRUST, IN MOUNTAIN PASS NEAR ———, ITALY!"

The above was the awful headlines in a newspaper I bought only a few minutes after I had finished reading Edward's letter. The account was written in the most sensational manner. While it did not name Edward, it had as well done so. The name was all that was wanting to convey to my mind that it was indeed my friend. I had scarce finished the account, with my mind filled with awful forebodings, when I was handed a message. It was from the Consul in Milan. It was very brief—"Rumor says DeHertbern assassinated; investigating." There was no longer any doubt. Everything pointed to his death. Had not the old seer as much as said he would be slain in a mountain pass? Had not Edward himself written an hour before setting out to attempt the rescue of his queen that he had forebodings of ill? I would have gone at once to Mr. DeHertbern and told him all I knew had I thought it would have served any purpose. But why, I argued, should I cause them pain when I knew absolutely nothing, however real that nothing seemed to me?

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But to follow Edward and the Count on their perilous enterprise. Two youths, clad in the garb of small merchants, might have been seen leaving the gates of Milan as the clock in a neighboring church tower was striking the hour of midnight. They would start at this unseemly time that they might be well on their way toward a railway station a few miles out from Milan by morning, the Count arguing that it would not be wise for them to take the train at Milan, where he was well known, and by some chance might be recognized. They left the city unseen, as they thought; but men who play for a large stake seldom risk a chance of failure. Since the moment of Miss Alleyn's abduction at the pass in the mountains, Mr. and Mrs. Alleyn had been under the eyes of one or more of the bandits. No one came to see them but these men knew of it, and followed that one back to his or her house or hotel. Edward had been to see them twice, which made him a marked man. His every movement was watched, and when, at midnight, he and the Count quietly left the Count's home, they were as quietly followed by a cloaked figure. This man knew his part well, for no sooner had they started on their way out from the city than he, by a circuitous run, got in front of them, so that had they seen him they would not have thought anything of it. He reached the station next morning before Edward and the Count, who, on seeing him, took him for a merchant like themselves. He soon engaged them in conversation. They found him a pleasant-spoken fellow, though not at all intrusive, and by the time the train came they were all on quite friendly terms. He had been to see some of his "customers," and was then on his way back to Lecco (which was the end of the railway), where he resided.

"If," said he, "you are staying any time in our city, I will be pleased to show you what little entertainment I can. It is not much, but if you care for fine old wines, I have a small cellar which my old father stocked and left to me. In it I have some passably fine vintages."

Now, if he had known the Count and all his tender points, he could not have touched one so close to his heart as that of a well-stocked wine cellar, especially if it smacked of great age.

"It will consume no time at all," said he to Edward; "besides, I am always looking for choice old wines for my own cellar." When they reached Lecco they agreed that if he would call for them at the inn in two hours they would go with him.

The two hours were not idle ones for the Lecco merchant (?). He hurried to the suburbs of the city, where he stopped at an old house which set back in a cluster of thick-foliaged trees. The house was spacious and the grounds large. He was greeted by the keeper, a beetle-browed man of possibly fifty.

"Well, Barrone, what's the lay now? Another ransom looming up over the pass? Has the father of the girl come down handsome yet? No? What's up? You said that was to be a 'gold mine.'"

"Yes, Colletti, but you see we don't know how much is in the 'mine.' He has offered 'the ransom of a king,' but we have not investigated his 'references' yet. Ha! ha! He may be able to throw in a few thousand more. We have let him know that we will 'name the ransom in due time.' But I am wasting precious minutes. In less than two hours I will drive here with two young men. They are dressed as small merchants, but I don't think either of them could sell a spool of thread. But that is neither here nor there. I have, Colletti—remember, *I* have—a fine old wine cellar, filled with some very choice and very old vintages, which I am to show my young friends. Remember, Colletti, when I come with them the cellar is mine, and you are in charge of it."

"Why, Barrone, there's not been a bottle of wine in that hole for years."

"Well, what's the odds just so it has a good, strong door. Colletti, it is my cellar for two hours, and after that it is yours, and if you don't keep a good watch over its lock for the next month—well, I shall make my report and you will wish you had gone to America before I had occasion to use your cellar."

"But what will I do with the men, Barrone? I can't keep them for a month! It has been a long while since I saw the color of your gold; you have promised me many times you would make me rich—rich so that I might go to America—but instead I am not even paid to look after this old property!"

"Ah! but Colletti, we have never had so rich a dove before. It will make us all rich, and we, too, may go to America—may have to go. Ha! ha!"

As Barrone drove up to the inn with an old carriage which he had hired for the occasion, he found Edward and the Count waiting for him.

"I was somewhat delayed," he said, "as my man was away with the carriage, but it will not take us long to drive out. You will find my old home somewhat gone to decay from its former grandeur; but you know the young men to-day have not that care for home which their fathers had."

Not for one moment did either of the young men suspect treachery. They could see that the place was indeed gone to decay, but had not the young merchant explained that 'the young men of to-day have not the care for home which their fathers had'?

He called to Colletti: "Here, my man, hold Cæsar, and see that he does not get away, while I show to these young merchants my wine cellar. Did you remove all the bottles from the front, for the new crop that will soon be coming in? Yes? 'Tis well." Then to Edward and the Count: "Our workmen in Lecco are like they are elsewhere, I suppose—of little value unless the master is about. Colletti is getting quite worthless since he got the notion of going to America; but here we are. As I told you, it is a very old cellar. For generations has it served the Barrones." He did all the talking now as he led the way. "It is old, but note how strong the door is built into the masonry. We do not build as our forefathers built. See those bins and racks. Those I just had emptied, and the wine put back to the farther end. Do you see how the spiders have been at work? It all indicates great age. Here in this room off to the left is where I keep the oldest wines—but, there! I forgot the key. Here, Colletti! Colletti! bring me the key basket! Colletti, here! Excuse me till I call him; he is so stupid—so stupid—so (bang! goes the door, and the key turns) stupid. Gentlemen, make yourselves comfortable; but mind you do not drink too much of the 'old vintages.' It is not good to be too free with old wine. I will have your friends, the Alleyns, call for you in one month. In the meantime you have the full run of my cellar. Colletti will see that you do not get hungry, providing, of course, you shall keep him supplied with purses. My dear friend, the Count, I shall always be pleased to keep your cellar filled with my choicest wines. Good-bye, my dear young 'merchants'! While I leave you to enjoy the luxuries of my old vintages, I go to the mountains to call upon my queen of beauty. Adieux, my stupid young merchants! Colletti, look to your guests!"

All this while the Count and Edward were indeed stupefied with horror at the turn of affairs. When they realized fully the situation, they ran to the door, or heavy iron grating, and shook it with all their strength, but they had as well try to open the door of a bank safe vault. As Barrone had said, "We do not build as our forefathers built."

No words need be wasted here in dwelling upon the feelings of the Count and Edward when they found themselves imprisoned in this deep cellar. No castle prison could have been more secure. They took the dilapidated lamp which Barrone had set down when he went for the key, and with it examined every part of the dungeon, but no hope of escape could they find. A real prison had been far better, for often secret doors and passageways are found in their walls or floors; but a wine cellar would not be so constructed as to be used for a prison. It was only the fertile mind of Barrone that conceived the use of this one to hold the two young men while he and his band could effect a settlement with Mr. Alleyn. The villain would not kill them so long as he could thus keep them out of the way. They might die of starvation, but they must themselves look to that, as Colletti would keep them supplied with food. Had not Barrone told them this?

Barrone having given orders to see that his prisoners were looked after, he was about to leave when Colletti called to him:

"You have locked the iron door—where is the key?"

"I will bring the key in one month. You need not give yourself any thought on that subject."

"But then, suppose it be learned that I am holding them prisoners—what will become of me?"

"Colletti, it must not be learned. No one ever comes here, so no one but you will know they are enjoying the run of my wine cellar. Ha! ha!"

"Hold! one more question. How am I to get them food? I am kept here half-starved myself."

"That is not my concern. Adieu, Colletti. Look after your two young merchants;" and he drove away with a contented, villainous smile on his rather handsome face.

He returned to the inn where Edward and the Count had stopped, and said he had been sent for the luggage of the two young men; that they had concluded to walk on to the next village. The inn-keeper protested that they had not paid for their room or service, and he could not give up their luggage.

"That is of no matter. I will pay that, and a nice penny to the pretty maids who serve you"—this for the ear of one of the maids who stood near. The inn-keeper was about to send for their luggage when a man standing near called him to one side and asked:

"Do you know this fellow who first drives away with your guests and then returns for their belongings without so much as a written order? I like not the looks of this fellow. There is that about his face that will be worth your careful watch. Tell him you cannot give the luggage, and if all is well he will quickly overtake the young men, who will return for it very shortly."

"You judge wisely. He cannot take it, even though he now bring an order." Then to Barrone: "The luggage I will keep. Tell the young men that they alone may have it."

Barrone was very angry. He went away declaring that he would soon return with the young merchants, who would be much annoyed at the inn-keeper's scant hospitality—but he did not return. He found the owner of the carriage, whom he hired to take him to the next town, and from there he set out on his long journey to the rendezvous of the bandits.

It was late the next morning before Colletti came to the door of the "prison," and then only after the two had called so loudly that he feared they might be heard by some passerby.

"Why all this fuss and bother? If you continue to make so loud an outcry, I shall leave you to call to the wind."

"You would not starve us like rats in a cage, would you?"

"Not if the rats had that about them which might pay for their keep," said Colletti, venturing to see if they had any of the purses Barrone had spoken about.

"Here," said the Count, "take this and get us of the best you can buy. Go at once, for we are weak with hunger. But, hold! first get us water—gallons of water—water! We are famishing of thirst!"

They had been shut in for nearly a day, with no food, and a long, careful search had not discovered a single drop of wine in this once well-stored cellar. Colletti's face took on a new look when he saw the gold piece taken from a well-filled purse. Gold—gold! How it did make his heart glad to see it. He had long served for gold which he had never gotten. It might be paid to him some time, but that time might never come. When he returned with the food and water he told them they would not need to call to him; that he would come often to see after their wants. His face wore as near a pleasant look as it could, after long years of frowns and scowls. His manner gave them courage to beg of him to release them. "I could not if I wished, as Barrone took with him the key; but old Colletti is not the man to betray a trust. They often leave me to go hungry, or work, but they know if once they place confidence in me I will honor it. No, you may have no hope of escape before one month; at the end of that time you will be released if the captive maiden is yet alive and the ransom is paid. Sometimes maidens die of grief before they are ransomed."

How this thought wrung Edward's heart! While he was helpless behind iron grating his "queen" might die of grief! Why had he been so really stupid to be thus duped by a stranger! That evening they tried to engage their keeper in conversation, but he would not talk, save when he felt he might wring gold from them. It is said that no armor of mail was ever made that did not have in it some weak link, through which the well-aimed arrow might not pierce. To find that weak link was now their only hope. "Gold?" No, they had tried to buy their way out to no avail.

"I love gold," said he; "but they will give me gold, when once they get the ransom."

Had not Barrone spoken of America? Ah! that may be the one weak link. Colletti had risen to go from the door-stoop, where he had been sitting after bringing them their supper.

"Have you ever been to America?" asked Edward. This hardened villain's whole being seemed to change at that simple question. He sat down again, and where before he had spoken in monosyllables or short, sullen sentences, he now became almost a fountain of words. He had not been. He had always wanted to go. He had friends there who were writing to him to come. America! America! would he ever see that land?

"I know many of your people in America," said Edward. "It was from them I learned your beautiful language. Some of them are poor; I have often helped them in their poverty;" and thinking he might be touched by gratitude for kindness shown to his people, Edward told of how he had once gone to see a family who had a crippled child, a boy of five years. "When I saw this poor little fellow trying to walk and crying because he could not, my heart went out to him. I put him under the care of one of our best surgeons, and had the gratification of seeing him walk as well as any of his playfellows. He was, oh, so happy! 'I wish I could pay you for my walking,' he would say; 'and when my grandpapa comes I will. My grandpapa will be very rich some time. He lives away off in Italy!' The little fellow would often run to me, and always say, 'When my grandpapa comes I will pay you.'"

Colletti drank in every word of Edward's story, and when it was finished, seemed to be stupefied with wonder. "Oh!" said he, "tell me the name of that child—that little crippled boy. It cannot be—it cannot be! So strange! So strange!" and he was so absorbed that Edward had almost to arouse him.

"His name," said Edward, "was Tony Colletti—the son of a stone-carver of the same name."

The keeper was almost like a man out of his mind. "Are you the good young man they wrote about who had done so much for mine in that far-off America? Oh! what have I done!—what have I done! Is this how I am repaying that kindness? How I had often wished to go to America to hunt you out and thank you—to bless you for what you had done! I must not stay here a minute—I will break down the door! Gold—a mine of it—could not keep you behind that iron door!" And in less than an hour he had battered the door off its hinges, and Edward and the Count breathed the free air again.

"I have often heard our air praised," said the Count; "but never before have I fully felt how it merited it!"

Every minute was now precious; but Edward knew that the only safety for Colletti was to get him away and out of the country, for death is Italian pay for betrayal of trust. "You have," said Edward to the keeper, "little time to waste in Italy. You must go at once to Milan, from thence to Genoa, where you can take a steamer to New York. There is all the gold you will need—and some to spare when you reach that city. If I shall come out of this and get back to New York, I will see that you shall never be wanting a friend."

Colletti would have detained them with profusions of gratitude. He would even risk his life to go with them and point out the intricate way to the rendezvous of the bandits, but they would not accept his offer. He then described as minutely as he could the way, but the many towns and villages he named only confused them. "It will take you four days to reach the mountain pass, and the place where the maiden is held is a half-day's walk to the northwest. Should you gain the camp and rescue the maiden, there is another way out from it to the southwest along a beautiful valley. This is the safer way, as it leads into a country where the bandits have not the influence or the friends they have over the other course. Then over this course they will not look for you, as no one knows of it but their own people." He gave them much else of useful direction.

When they returned to the inn they learned how nearly they had lost their means of reaching the camp of the bandits, and were so grateful to the inn-keeper that they paid him for all the time they had spent in the wine cellar, and left besides a pretty penny for each of the maids, who curtsied their thanks as the two young men left, still in their merchants' suits. These, however, they exchanged for their minstrel garb in a forest when they had gotten well out of Lecco, lest they should be seen by others of the bandits, who might know through Barrone of the "two young merchants."

When they were fully dressed as minstrels they were both surprised at the complete change it made in their appearance.

"Even Barrone would not know us in these," said Edward. The merchants' clothes were left in the forest.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A minstrel is the friend of all. The money of the peasant will buy as much as the king's. The gold of the bandit will go as far as the priest's.

Little of interest occurred for the first two days. They stopped at night at some wayside inn, where a mountain minstrel is always welcome. Their music attracted wherever they stopped to play. Many remarked that such singing they had never heard. The money which was given them was always added to and found its way to some needy old man or woman many of whom they met as they went along.

One night they were not fortunate in finding an inn, and had to lie down under the stars, but their sleep was as sound and as sweet as on the softest of beds. In the morning they awoke long before the sun was up. The dew covered all the grass around; the birds sang out their joy, a distant tinkle of sheep-bells was heard away up along the mountain side; the barking of a dog in the valley beneath them; the loud voice of a mountaineer trying to sing some song he had heard a minstrel sing; the lowing of cows being driven home for milking time; the murmuring brook, purling its way along down the mountain, and a hundred other sights and sounds—filled the hearts of the two minstrels. Soon the sun came, shooting its rays over a distant mountain range, turning into a million diamonds the dewdrops on the grass and then drinking them up at a quaff. Oh, the glory of an early morning in the Alps! The man whose life has always been spent in the city knows not the joys of the country morning!

It was the evening of the third day. The minstrels had made such excellent use of their time that they were but a short distance from the memorable Pass. They had reached a considerable hamlet. The gay dresses of the girls and the "best clothes" of the young man bespoke a gala night. Edward and the Count were hailed with joy as they were seen entering the village just at nightfall. Music is ever welcome. From the tent of the wandering Bedouin to the palace of the king it brings joy. A musician needs no introduction. The world only recognizes his music. The singer is forgotten in the song. After the two young men had partaken of their supper, the prettiest girls vieing with each other in serving them with the best the inn provided, they were conducted into the large square room, where all had gathered to hear the music. Two other minstrels were there and were singing as Edward and the Count came in from the supper room. They had soft melodious voices, but there was no volume to their music. They sang a number of songs and duets, and sang them well as they had wisely chosen songs of little compass. These minstrels were well known to the company. They had passed up and down for years along that mountain road. But here were two whom no one there had ever seen. They came into the hamlet unheralded. Who they were or from whence they came no one of that large company could tell. And for that matter no one asked. Not who they were, but could they sing? that was the silent question in the mind of every one present. The two minstrels have ceased singing. The company, now all expectant, await the opening song of the unknown singers.

These people, unlettered and unlearned, had in them an inborn knowledge of music. They might not sing or play themselves, but their ears were attuned to the good and could quickly detect the bad.

Edward and the Count knew that to give lasting pleasure they must not sing their best songs first. They would sing a simple ballad of the class sung by the other minstrels. This they did, and all about the room could be heard unfavorable comments. "They cannot sing with our old minstrels."

"No such singers as our own."

"Give us the old ones."

"We expected more from their appearance."

"No singers like our own," and many more in like criticism. The musician, naturally a jealous being, is never happier than when his rival fails to please. The old minstrels fairly beamed with joy when, at the close of the song, it was given but faint demonstration of pleasure. That was what the singers had expected and wished for. They knew the company had judged them by their first song. The next one was better received, and each one thereafter was given more applause. They were now far beyond the old singers. No comments could be heard but those of praise. They would sing one more, their best. It was a duet. They began soft and plaintively, then gradually increasing in volume, until it grew into a musical tempest. The whole company rose long before they had finished, and when they had done a great storm of applause followed, and for minutes nothing could be heard but the cheer on cheer of the wildly excited company. They sat down as though they had but sung a simple ballad. There was no look about them that showed they felt they had done other than ordinary—even the old minstrels, looking on them as masters, came and thanked them.

"No such music has ever been heard in these parts!"

Fortunately a minstrel is never asked his name or his home. They have no home, and any name will answer.

They had scarcely concluded their singing when word was quietly given them "would they come into the adjoining room?" They followed the messenger and were conducted into the presence of a man, whose like they had neither ever met with. He was tall and broad shouldered. His face was covered with a heavy beard. His hands were large, and at the ends of powerful arms. He was a giant in strength as well as in stature, and yet he had a kindly spoken voice, and seemed even gentle in manner.

"A minstrel," he began when the messenger had left the room and the three were alone, "is the friend of all. He knows no man or class of men. They are all the same to him. The money of the peasant will buy as much as the king's. The gold of the bandit will go as far with him as the priest's. I have heard you sing. I have never before heard voices equal to yours. I am a man of few words and speak to a purpose. I am a bandit. I am called a leader. The government wants my head, but no one will risk his own for the prize offered for mine—knowing all this are you afraid of me?" They smilingly assured him they were not.

"Why should we be? A minstrel fears no man, as no man is his enemy."

"Then listen to what I would tell you," said the bandit. "At our camp, but a few miles to the northwest from here, we hold a captive for a ransom. She is the most beautiful maiden whom any of us have ever seen. She is pining away, and we fear she may die before a ransom can be agreed upon. We had it almost concluded when a young

American came to Milan and saw her father, since which time he will do nothing. But with this meddlesome American and his friend, Count Drasco, safe in our power at Lecco we will soon effect a settlement, but every day's delay makes the danger of her death more imminent. I am thus explicit that you may see the situation and be ready for my offer. I want you to come to our camp and sing for the maiden. I am convinced that your voices will cheer her until we can arrange with the father. Will you come? I will pay you what you ask."

"Our mission," said Edward, "is to cheer, to make dull life endurable, to make the sad forget trouble, and the whole world happy. We will accept."

"You will not regret your answer. I will call for you here in the morning." They saw him no more that night. They returned to the large room, but were not prepared for the sight which met them. Five men on either side stood facing each other with round sticks an inch in thickness and three feet long in their right hands. At a signal they began striking, each man at the one opposite, as though in sword play. The blows were given in deadly earnest, and yet all the while the girls sat around the sides of the room and seemed really to enjoy the sight. One after another of the men were knocked down, and a fall meant out. This kept up until but two were left, and the one remaining of these two was declared the victor. No one seemed to feel ill at the fellow knocking him down, but took it in good part. Imagine the surprise of Edward and the Count to see the victor on this occasion the man who had left them in his wine cellar—the villain Barrone. He was very much elated at his success, and passed around the room bantering the various young men to try their skill. When he came to Edward he stopped, looked at him, was about to pass on, when some one called out:

"Barrone, beware of a minstrel. He travels in many lands and learns many things."

"That for your minstrel," as he slapped the face of Edward. In an instant the thought of what this villain had done to him and his friend, and the insult of the slap added to his villainy, was too much for Edward's American blood, and he called out "Accept" amid the loud cheering of the girls, whose favorite he instantly became. He was given one of the sticks, and found himself facing his enemy, this time on an equal footing. He had profited by watching the others fence, and learned that it was the same as sword fencing. He soon saw he need have no fear of Barrone, who began striking viciously but very wildly. His strokes were cleverly parried, and for several minutes, to the great pleasure of his friends, he did nothing but prevent Barrone striking him. When he had kept this up quite long enough he put into his arm all the force of an outraged spirit, and struck such a blow as none of them had ever seen fall upon a man's head before. It was an hour before Barrone came to his senses, but no one noticed him, while everybody heaped praises on the minstrel. Even Barrone himself, when he came to, grasped his hand and congratulated him with no enmity whatsoever. The Count's silent nod of approval was far sweeter than all the spoken praises. The look that Edward gave back meant: "Part of that blow was for you."

Physical injury meant nothing to these people. If the injured were not themselves, a man might be killed, and they would think but little of it. After the company was about all gone a young man, who had been quite friendly toward Edward, said in a matter-of-fact sort of way: "I wonder if they have found out who that fellow was Amabilli killed this afternoon up at the Pass?"

"Why," said Edward, horrified at the thought, "I hadn't heard of it, tell me about it—you mean Amabilli who was here to-night?"

"Yes, he came down to bring word about it. You see the fellow came up here meddling around about a girl that Amabilli has up at the camp. Yes, the fellow is out here in the shed now. They brought him in this evening."

"And did the people who were here know about it?" asked Edward. The Count trying all the while to catch his eye to stop such dangerous questioning.

"Yes—why do you ask? of course they knew. Where do you live, my friend? You're not a "gov gilly," are you, up here singing round to capture the 25,000 francs?"

"What are you talking about, you fellows?" broke in the Count, who saw the dangerous turn matters had taken by Edward's honest line of thought—then continued before his question could be answered: "Speaking of girls, you have some very pretty ones here. It's a wonder we never found this place before. Hereafter this must be added to our circuit. You see, we have traveled a good bit in Tyrol. Now there's the country where they can sing—everybody sings, and Germany—why even the Russians are a musical set. And the Finlanders—" It is hard telling where he would have gone had not the landlord said he always made it a point to close up before breakfast, and they would have to defer their musical travels until to-morrow. It was a question in the Count's mind if he had gotten the young man far enough away from the other young man in the shed, but he certainly hoped he had, else he and Edward might next day be called upon to join him instead of going to sing, as Edward would say, "before the Queen."

"Would the young man call to see them in the morning?" The young man eyed Edward very closely and critically, and said "he thought he would."

CHAPTER XL.

What mother will watch for the coming of an absent son? What maiden will wait for him who will never return to her?

The Count talked in very low tones after they had gone to their room, but Edward must have heard him. As to his questions thereafter, he said "he would never again be curious about anything." "Put all your gold carelessly," said the Count, "under the center of your bed and your minstrel purse of small coins under your pillow, as this is a strange country we are in, and often strange countries have peculiar ways."

Now all about the inn was still, the people of the hamlet and country side had gone their various ways, and where a short time before was heard boisterous laughter and rough merriment was now silence.

At some distance from the inn, seated on a rude bench, might have been seen two men in low converse.

"I like not those minstrels," said the younger man. "They are far too curious for minstrels. To-night when I spoke about the fellow whom Amabilli had to run through for his meddling, the larger one of them, the one who came so nearly leaving you a fit companion for Amabilli's young fellow in the shed there, wanted to know 'if the people who were here to-night knew there was a dead man so near?' "

"And what," queried Barrone, his companion, "did you reply to his question?"

"I was so surprised at the utter innocence of it that it struck me that he could not be a minstrel, as a minstrel knows our ways and asks not questions so simple. 'Where,' I asked, 'do you live, my friend?' and further, 'You're not a "gov gilly" singing round to capture the 25,000 francs, are you?' Well, the other one saw the turn I took on him, and had you heard the race he led me through Tyrol, up through Germany and Russia, leaving me to freeze in Finland, you would have thought he was more than anxious to get me out and away from my own little hamlet here in the mountains. No, Barrone, I like not the minstrels, and yet do you know that Amabilli has engaged them to go to the camp to sing for your beautiful maiden?"

"What, and not speak of it to me? I like not this in Amabilli. These minstrels may be armed, and I am too well aware that one of them, at least, knows how to use arms. Go," said the bandit, "and search well for arms—and their purses for your trouble. There, take these two vials. If they sleep not sound use the larger one. Its odor is a sweet sleep enticer, and you need fear no awakening until you have examined every part of their belongings. If they be as you suspect other than minstrels, they will have arms secreted, and if so much as a knife you find—*use the smaller vial.* You know the secret door to their chamber. Go, and if to-morrow the priest have three instead of one to read over, he will ask no questions. Our priest knows the simple ways of his parish. I will await you here."

"Were I not certain that the two young merchants were safe in the wine cellar, I would think that merchant could turn minstrel. In form and bearing these minstrels are my two merchants, but here is the key, and old Collitti never betrayed a trust." And Barrone smiled on in his soliloquy, and waited the return of his messenger. "And what must be the account for Amabilli's victim? Amabilli has too many of late to account for. Ah, I have it! To let it be known that this one is an Englishman would be to bring that government upon our heads, as England avenges a wrong done its most humble citizen. And this young man, I should judge, is far above the humble rank. I will report to Milan that a young American has met his death in the mountain pass. I will describe him, having in mind the young man who stopped our negotiations with old Alleyn. Ha, ha, Barrone, your wisdom is deep. This will serve a double purpose. It will keep us out of English investigation and open again the way to effect a settlement with old Alleyn—and as for America—well, America is too much occupied with money gaining to care for a lone citizen who may chance to have stood at the wrong end of a sword in a foreign land. They may investigate, but that has a far different meaning in America. No one fears it—but here comes Fulco—and what have you learned, Fulco?"

"I have learned that I am a fool and should be beaten with stripes. I found not so much as a tooth pick, and as for purses for my trouble, when I saw the contents of the two I found under their pillows I had not the heart to touch a single centime. I have wronged the minstrels. I gained their chamber with not so much as a creak of the door. I let each have a good whiff from the larger vial, but they seemed so sound asleep already that it was of scant need. I looked in every part of their clothing. I even examined their clumsy-looking guitars for so much as a knife inside, but found nothing. I fear that they may have taken it ill my inquisitive speech to them this night, but I will make it up to them in the morning." And so agreeable was his manner toward them when next they met, that they were reassured that there was no danger. He took them to see the slain man in the shed, nor marked the look of horror on Edward's face at the sight! There lay a youth of about his own age, handsome as a Greek god. His dark hair clung in rich waves around his high forehead, and he looked as though in happy sleep. "What mother," thought Edward, "will watch for the coming of an absent son? What maiden will wait for him who will never return to her?" To avenge that life would be his mission. If not, he, too, would meet the same fate. He silently swore it! While they yet stood looking on the face of the dead, the priest came, and without so much as a glance of interest, read a short service, and went as he came, in silence. They buried the young Englishman under a tree nearby and thought the chapter was ended.

CHAPTER XLI.

She stands resplendent in her beauty. That face which had first appeared to him in a tomb of the dead of thousands of years appears again in the tomb of the living.

Early in the forenoon came Amabilli. So gentle was his manner that Edward could scarce believe him the monster he knew him to be.

"Good morrow, gentlemen. I trust your night has been happily spent! I had come earlier, but my captive maiden is more despondent than ever. We have promised her so often that she would soon be released, that she is losing all her spirit, and refuses the daintiest food we can prepare for her. I have promised her music. The promise brought a faint flush to her pale cheek. The change from the rough voices she has heard so long will bring back the color to that cheek."

"Barrone, have you sent your report? What have you heard from Milan?"

"Alleyn is beginning to waver. He has added one thousand pounds to the ransom," said Barrone.

"Ah, it is working well—we will be in no haste to settle—but what report have you sent?"

"I have just sent a messenger that a young American was slain while in a quarrel!"

"Bright idea. 'Tis well you did not report him an Englishman, as that had given us trouble." This brought a flush of shame to Edward's face, to hear his own country held in so light esteem by these rough bandits.

"And now, gentlemen, we will away to the camp. You will find the way a very rough one, but we must choose a retreat where ten men may withstand a hundred. Barrone, come to the camp to-morrow. Fulco, remain here, and bring to us the slightest word of danger, or if you hear from Milan bring us the report at once."

"Rough way" conveyed no conception of what they found. Although the distance was comparatively short, its turns in and out of canyon after canyon—up ascents that required such long tedious climbing that they were well worn out by the time they had reached their destination.

Edward's mind was filled with forebodings of evil. Suppose his Queen could be gotten away from under the watchful eyes of these rugged men, how could he ever hope to escape over a path so rough? A path known so well to these men that they could traverse its most intricate parts even in the dark? And yet he would not lose hope. "He would try," had he not said, "even though he were slain?"

As they neared the camp, located on a high plateau which commanded a view of miles of mountain country, they passed sentry after sentry until they reached a large tent, around which were clustered other smaller ones. It was almost dark. The fires were lighted in crevasses of the rocks, and women, little less rough looking than the men—who sat around smoking—were preparing supper. No one gave any heed to the minstrels. The sight of minstrels was common enough in these rough mountain wilds.

When the supper was set and all were seated around on the ground, an old woman came out from the large tent leading a pale young creature—not leading, but supporting. She seemed so weak, this maiden, that even with the support of the old woman she could scarcely walk. She looked neither to the right nor to the left. She saw not the minstrels, though she passed them by to take her seat on a rock. The daintiest food was set before her, but she scarcely touched of it, and was soon assisted back to the tent. After the supper was finished and everything cleared away, Amabilli motioned for the minstrels to come and sit at the opening of the large tent and to sing.

Low, sweet music broke the stillness of the night and rang out soft and clear on the air. The Queen, aroused from her despondency, listened as though 'twere from heaven. Used as she was to the finest music ever written, no music had so stirred her soul before.

"From whence comes that sound? Am I losing my senses at last from these terrible days of waiting? Will I awake only to find I have been dreaming? No, the music goes on, on, now soft and low, now increasing in volume as though in some grand Cathedral. I will go to it. Weak? no I am strong now." And rising slowly, she approaches the opening of the tent and stands with the light of the campfire full in her face. Edward sees that face, and, almost forgetting where he is and the danger of a single false movement, is about to rise and fall at her feet, but a look from the Count brings him to his senses, and he sings on with no quaver in his voice. That face which had first appeared to him in a tomb of the dead of thousands of years appears again in the tomb of the living. She stands resplendent in her beauty; the color again mounts to her cheek and the light of hope fills her eyes. Long she stands there as though transfixed with the sound, then slowly returns to her seat in the tent. Amabilli sees the change and is overjoyed. No danger of death now—music has brought back the roses to her cheek, and she will live. He grasps the hands of the singers and pours out his thanks to them.

"I knew when I first heard your voices in the inn that you could save her, but I did not know the full power of your voices." Then to Edward: "You sing to-night with tenfold the sweetness that you did in the inn. Your very soul seemed to go out from you. Ah, the life-giving virtue of the human voice!"

The hour was late. The two minstrels were shown to a tent somewhat off from the others and on the opposite side from whence they had entered the camp.

The next morning the maiden walked out alone and joined the group at breakfast. Amabili was rejoiced to see with what relish she ate. Ever and anon she would glance at the minstrels. As she looked at Edward there would come to her eyes a strange light as though of something almost remembered, then it would fade away, and a sadness would come over her face. But all during the day she could never see him without the recurrence of that look, and each time the sadness seemed less marked, yet it was never absent.

Edward was so affable in his manner toward all the camp that he was soon on friendly terms with them. He would frequently speak words of English, but never found himself understood. No one knew even the simplest word of his native tongue.

Just after the midday meal Barrone came almost breathless into the camp.

"Danger! Danger!" he cried as soon as he could speak. "Five men have come to the inn looking for the young Englishman. They have asked of everybody "had they seen a young stranger?" but no one had seen him. They asked of the priest, but he knew nothing. They are heavily armed, and swear they will find him. As they partook of their breakfast they ate with their guns beside them on the table, while one of their number stood at the door. Our people are beside themselves with fear, as these men intimate that more of their number are coming. Amabilli, what is to be done?" Here was seen the leadership of Amabilli. "What is to be done? What need be done? You fear where no fear should be. These men will look about them and go as they have come. They will see nothing, they will find nothing. I know my people, and my people never betray. Go back again and come only when there is real danger. No—stay. I fear more from you than from any one in the hamlet. You see danger, and your manner may betray your fear. I will not risk your return." And nothing more was said, and by no sign could be seen any concern on Amabilli's face.

Edward was ever watching for an opportunity to speak with Miss Alleyn, but the old hag never left her side for a moment. If she left the tent this ugly old creature was with her. She might go and come at will, but never alone.

Miss Alleyn saw this anxiety on Edward's part, and by look told him plainly that she saw it. This was a joy to him. If their tongues were bound, no force could bind their eyes. She knew not why, but in that minstrel she seemed to divine a means of escape. But how? Could two unarmed minstrels used only to music hope to withstand ten trained bandits used only to arms? No; that were a hope without reason of fulfillment, and yet it was a hope, and hope, even without reason, was sweet to her.

"Why," she would often ask herself, "does the one seem so much nearer to me than the other? Both are handsome and both sing equally well, and yet the one seems as though I had known him for years! Did I believe in a prior existence I would know him as a friend in that other existence."

And thus the days went by, each like the other. No possible chance presented itself of even the slightest hope of escape. The dull days were succeeded by nights of music. Their songs, though sung over and over again, ever sounded sweet and new. Miss Alleyn, who had a fine voice, often joined in and sang with the minstrels to the great joy of Edward.

On the third day Fulco came to the camp, and said that the five men after remaining two days went away without learning any word of the young Englishman, although they had made great effort . They had asked of everybody, even the little children, but all were silent.

"Did I not tell you," asked Amabilli, "that my people never betrayed? Ah, I know my people! What word is there from Milan, Fulco?"

"Nothing of importance, unless it be that Colletti was seen there. I thought, Barrone, you had left him at Lecco guarding your two young merchants?"

"What," said Barrone in great surprise, "Colletti in Milan! Pity the young men who must die in that hole! Well, if they could not keep him in gold it is no concern of mine. No one will ever know, for no one ever goes to that wine cellar. My wine cellar now!" Even the hardened bandits could not but feel pity, but the look Edward gave to the Count was not one of pity.

"Fulco," said Amabili, "go back to the hamlet and wait for further news. Send a messenger to Milan with this message: 'Accept offer of Alleyn. Arrange for exchange at our old house (in the large room, first floor) at Lecco, five days from to-day at exactly 3 o'clock afternoon. Instant death to maiden if a single sign of duplicity is suspected.' Go."

"We will release the two young merchants from the wine cellar, and not wait the full month I promised them!"

And Barrone laughed heartily at the thought.

When the minstrels heard this they knew that what they did must be done without delay. They feared that by some mischance there might be duplicity suspected where none was meant on the part of Mr. Alleyn, and his daughter slain on the very moment of her release.

They came and went in and about the camp as they pleased. They had made long excursions in all directions. They had found the path that Colletti had told them about and had followed it for miles, carefully studying all its turns. Some distance back of their tent and at the very side of this path stood one lone pine tree of immense size. It stood out clear in the horizon and might be seen plainly from the camp even at night. Miss Alleyn had often gone to it with the old woman, for since her strength had returned with her spirits she walked much about the camp.

CHAPTER XLII.

It was Foster's immortal gem, "The Old Folks at Home." This song is typically American, and yet all the world can claim it. It is the thought and not the river. Every land beneath the sun has its Suanee River. It may be but the babbling brook that purls its way along down the mountain side past some lone cottage, or it may be the mighty stream bearing on its bosom the commerce of the world past the gates of the palace. It is all the same, the brook or the river, the cottage or the palace, if there's where the old folks stay.

That evening the minstrels sang longer than usual. And what they had never done before, they sang songs in English. The instant they began the first one Miss Alleyn seemed scarcely able to contain her joy. At first she thought they were repeating words with no knowledge of those words, but when Edward looked the full meaning of certain parts of the song, then she knew in her heart that he was speaking to her. One of those songs, whose melody is known throughout the whole world, touched her deeply. Tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her cheeks as he sang:

"An exile from home splendor dazzles in vain." She was an "exile from home," which she feared she would never see again, but in the joy of hearing those sweet words sung by the tongue of her own land by one whose accent she knew could not be other than that of her home, her joy was almost too great. None of the bandits seemed to wonder at the strange words, and many of them even hummed the tune or sang their own words to it. By this time Edward knew it was safe to venture on the one great theme of the night. He would improvise in song his plan for her escape. He tuned anew his guitar, and, lightly touching the chords, began singing the first verse of Juanita. Instead of its chorus he sang:

Nita, Juanita, listen to the words I'll sing;
Nita, Juanita, joy to thee they'll bring.

Instead of the second verse, he sang the plan of her escape. Each line she caught as though her life depended upon her not missing a word.

When in the morning, just before the break of day
Come to the pine tree by the lone pathway,
There we'll meet you, yes we'll meet you,
And we'll guide you to your home,
Fear no evil will betide you,
We'll be waiting, waiting, come.

He fain would have sung the chorus of the second verse, but he felt he had no right. Some time he might sing it, but not now. In its stead he sang:

Nita, Juanita, gladly from these friends you'll part.
Nita, Juanita, do not leave your heart.

At this bit of sarcasm she could but smile. That smile told Edward how quick she was to catch his meaning, and felt that the plan would at least be attempted by her. They sang one more song before separating for the night. It was Foster's immortal gem, "The Old Folks at Home." This ballad is typically American, and yet all the world can claim it. It is the thought and not the river. Every land beneath the sun has it Suanee River. It may be but the babbling brook that purls its way along down the mountain side past some lone cottage, or it may be the mighty stream bearing on its bosom the commerce of the world, past the gates of the palace. It is all the same, the brook or the river, the cottage or the palace, if "There's where the old folks stay." As they sang Miss Alleyn joined in, but she, too, could improvise, for instead of singing Foster's words she sang her own, in which she told how that she had caught the full meaning of Edward's "Juanita," and promised to be at the tree at the appointed hour.

Long after the whole camp was still, Fulco came running with the wild news that a messenger had just come to the hamlet with the report that it was found that the wine cellar had been battered in and that the two prisoners had escaped. Every bandit was up, and the camp was instantly like a hive of bees overturned. What was to be done? Where were the two men? When did they escape?

"I know nothing further than that I have told you. Yes, here is something else, two suits of clothes were found in a forest near Lecco by a peasant. They were small merchants' clothes."

"The very same," said Barrone. "And when were they found? Tell me—tell me."

"The messenger who brought the word," said Fulco, "could not say further than that it must have been six days ago."

The least excited of all was Amabilli, who quietly asked, "Has anyone been at the hamlet but the five armed men?"

"No," replied Fulco, "excepting the two minstrels, but it could not have been they," remembering his former mistake in judging them too hastily.

Said Amabilli: "Judge not too hastily, these men seem to me no common minstrels. I have thought so all along."

"They are the merchants," said Barrone. "I am now certain of it. Their form and bearing are the same to a close point. I would not have doubted had I not been so sure they were in the wine cellar. Let's to them at once;" and he started toward their tent followed by the now thoroughly excited bandits.

"Hold. Not too hastily," spoke the bearded leader, "we will take the day for it. We can the better question them and detect every movement of the face. We will question each apart from the other, and if their stories do not compare we will know them as the men. They are safe, as they know nothing of the cause of the commotion. Speak no word of what you think. Now to sleep all and be up at break of day, as to-morrow will be a most momentous one for us." He spoke truly. The most momentous of his life.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Edward's quick eye guided his blade to a vital spot and the giant lay dead at his feet.

"Edward! wake, Edward," softly spoke the Count, "the day comes on very soon! I can see the grey streaks in the sky." They were now both full awake, and stealthily they move toward the great tree. They stand and wait. The day grows lighter, and yet Miss Alleyn has not come. "Oh, why, why is she so long? The camp will soon be stirring, and yet I see no sign of her." They hear a stealing step behind them down the path. It is a dark figure moving slowly toward them.

"It is a sentry coming—be ready, Count. Here, step behind the tree, lest he see you. No time to think of sparing life now. It is his life or ours, for if we are found here at this hour we are lost. Now, ready. I hear his step just beyond the tree—hold. Why, Miss Alleyn, we had nearly slain you. One step more and you had been struck down for a sentry." They turn to go down the path, when they hear a most fiendish scream coming from the great tent. The hag has missed her fair prisoner. She rushes out wildly screaming. The camp is in an uproar. Men and women running in every direction. They run to the tent of the minstrels. It is empty. The shrill whistle of their leader rings out on the morning air. Instantly every man gathers around Amabilli for quick orders.

"Fulco, take you five men and spread down the east path toward the hamlet, arouse our people everywhere along the way, spare no one but the maiden, and slay her, too, if there be chance of her escape. Baritzo, you go with two men to the south and leave no nook unexplored! Barrone, come with me to the west path by the great pine. I feel certain they have gone by that way, as the minstrels' tent is on that side and no sentry to the west. Throw away your scabbard, carry naught but your naked sword. Show no quarters. Oh, that I had taken your advice last night, and not waited for the morning—but they cannot escape us. The maiden is too weak to hold out long. It will soon be full light, and at the next turn we may see a long distance down the mountain. I would the men were armed, as I have never yet slain an unarmed man. I even showed the young Englishman fair play, as he carried a beautiful blade. I will show it you on our return. Let us hasten. We are almost at the turn now. Here we are. Can you see them? Look, too, for signs of foot prints. There, see in the sand. Ah, I was not wrong. They thought to come this path, that we would look for them in the other directions. Their steps are long. They are still running, and yet I thought the maiden too weak for flight. Watch close that they do not elude us, and we pass them. The steps are yet plain, but of less length. The maiden must soon tire. There, look, Barrone! Ha, ha, I knew they must come into view shortly. Now go less fast as I am not used to so long a run. Hold! Call to them, Barrone. My voice is not strong."

"Stop!" cries Barrone, but the minstrels, one on either side of the almost fainting maiden, help her along.

"Oh, I cannot go further," she begs the minstrels to leave her. "Leave me here and save yourselves. Do not, I pray you, lose your lives. You do not know those men.

They have no mercy. They know no mercy. You are unarmed. Without me you may escape them, as you are younger—I—can——" She cannot finish the sentence; she has fainted.

"Now, Edward, be ready. You are the better swordsman. You take Amabili, I will fight Barrone. Good-by, Edward. We have done what we could. I have no regret."

By this time the two bandits were almost up to them.

"Ha, ha, my fine minstrels. Did you think to play on us as upon a guitar? Not so. We make not so sweet music, our chords are too harsh!"

"You grew tired of my wine cellar full soon, my young merchants," tauntingly called out Barrone. "Methinks this time I will lock the door so tight you will not get out in a day!"

Not until the two bandits were almost upon them did they prepare to draw their swords.

As each held his guitar, Amabilli sneeringly asked: "And are you going to play for us, my sweet minstrels? Ha, ha, have you not already played full much? Get each a stick in yonder wood and play 'gainst our pretty blades. Barrone here tells me you handle well the stick!"

Edward and the Count now stood each before his man. "Will you sing in English, as you did last night for the fair maiden, or will you give us soft Italian music? Sing again 'Juanita.' 'Twas a beauteous song, and well 'twas sung." And Amabilli bantered on that he might have time to gain his breath, of which the long run had so well nigh deprived him. He is breathing now with more ease, but yet feeling they had the young men at their mercy, continued to tease them as they would have teased at rats in a cage before putting an end to them.

"And now, my lads, sing us the song we all know, that we may join you, 'Home, Sweet Home.' Sing it us once more before we send you home as I did the young Englishman in whom Fulco tells me you took much interest at the inn."

"Have an end to your jibes," cried the Count, who was growing impatient and angered at the insults heaped upon them. Barrone made a pass at the Count, who on the instant jumped backward, drawing, as he did, his sword and throwing behind him the guitar. The movement was so quick that it seemed to Barrone that it had been done by magic. Barrone began now to test the skill of the Count by feints, thrusts and cuts, but it was soon apparent to him that Edward was not the only one who knew how to protect himself. The Count was in a moment on the aggressive. He was younger and far quicker, but he had not the great strength of his vicious antagonist, who became now like a wild beast, for the Count had given him a painful cut on his sword hand. He forgot all skill and swung wildly, becoming the most difficult of adversaries, for the Count could not tell by any rule what he would do next. He swept a cut that must have severed the Count's head, had he not dropped upon his knees with the quickness of a trained athlete. The blow swung Barrone almost off his feet, so great was the force he had expended. It was his last, for with a lightning thrust the Count had struck upward and passed his keen blade almost through the bandit's body, who fell forward and could not rise.

All this while there was a more terrific fight in progress between two more skillful swordsmen. There were no wild, vicious thrusts, but every movement was by a rule. Edward had never before met a man of so powerful build or one who was so perfect in the handling of a sword. It was thrust, parry, cut, parry on both sides for a long while. Neither seemed to have any advantage in skill, but Amabilli, taller and broader, would seem to bear his adversary down by very force. Edward, though of less weight and height, had muscles so hard and supple that they seemed like bands of tempered steel, so that his strength was fully equal to that of the bandit. Long after the Count had vanquished his antagonist did these two men stand facing each other like two well matched lions. Neither could gain a point, though both fought so hard for one. There was no relaxing for a single moment. Amabili's sword is snapped and he stands at Edward's mercy! The giant panting for breath expects no mercy, as he himself would have given none. Edward fain would have given him life, but the moment the bandit saw that his life would be spared, he quickly ran to where Barrone lay and grasped his sword and again stood ready to continue to the end. The end was not far off. These skilled fencers were of equal strength and of equal skill, but not of equal endurance. The older man begins to show the effect of all his years of wild, vicious life. Edward, who, on the other hand, had been when at school remarkable for his endurance, and had led a careful life, was yet fresh when Amabilli's strength was waning. The moment his strength began to waver was his last. This man whose victims were without number had finally met one he could not vanquish, and yet he fought on to the end. One wrong move and Edward's quick eye guided his blade to a vital spot, and the giant lay dead at his feet.

Miss Alleyn, who had come out of her fainting spell just as the Count had beaten down Barrone, sat and looked on at what seemed certain death for Edward. The Count would have led her away, but she would not go. "No, he is fighting for my life, and I will stay to the end; a braver man I have never looked upon. Amabilli has never met a man his equal, the women at the camp were ever telling of his prowess. There, his sword is snapped Why does not the minstrel take advantage of it as he would a venomous viper? He is not fighting with a man. Amabilli does not fight as a man would fight. He and Barrone would have slain you two unarmed as they thought you to be.—There—and Amabilli has met at last his just fate. I am a woman and hate the sight of blood, but 'twas our lives or theirs, and I cannot but be happy at the turn." The look she gave to Edward was one of wonderment, admiration and gratitude.

"How can I thank you, my friends? You can never know the full depth of my gratitude."

"No time now for thanks, my dear lady," said Edward, "as we do not know how soon the rest of the bandits may be upon us, and for the moment I have had all the fighting I want. We must away as fast as possible from these parts. How fortunate we were thrown into the cellar, Count, else we had not learned from Colletti this 'other way out.'"

"What do you mean," asked Miss Alleyn, "about the wine cellar, and who is Count?"

"In due time," said Edward, "we will have much to tell you, but not now."

They found that their instruments were uninjured, though quite unstrung after the hard fought battles. Both bandits were quite dead. They would leave them, as they knew their friends would find them, and the little priest would read over them, and with possibly more feeling than he had over the young Englishman.

As Edward had said, they were far from being out of danger, as already Barritzo and his two men finding nothing to the south had returned to camp, and were starting to follow in the direction the two leaders had gone. even yet while these leaders were fighting their last battle.

The two minstrels and the maiden had scarce gotten out of sight when the three bandits came to the turn. They see them and are now running full toward them.

CHAPTER XLIV.

No, good lady, these bandits are most honorable men, most honorable men, my good lady. They may be rough and wild in their manners, rough and wild, but they are the very soul of honor, the very soul of honor!

Bill had seen the paper containing the account of the assassination of the young American (?) and had hurried with it to Mr. DeHertbern, who read it and turned pale. Being a man of quick action, he had Bill ring for a Cable messenger, and hurriedly wrote out a message to the Consul at Milan. "Spare no money. Hire men, a regiment if needs be, and find my son Edward. Draw on me for funds. Waste not a minute!"

The American press is quick to gather the full details of a "story," and before night all the papers in the city had columns written, giving not only all the facts with Edward DeHertbern's named as the young American, but much more added to make the account the more sensational. Some of them went so far as to write up glowing obituaries. Edward used often to say afterward that a man never knows how truly great he is until he has been temporarily assassinated and has read his own obituary notices.

There was great sorrow in Mr. DeHertbern's family, as Edward was a most loved son and brother. Not knowing what could have taken him into the remote mountain pass, the mystery was indeed very great. All day long friends called, and notes and letters poured in, full of genuine expressions of sorrow.

While this was enacting in New York, Mr. Alleyn was in long conference with two emissaries of Amabili, who though claiming to have no part with him, yet negotiated most fully for him, with complete knowledge of the minutest circumstance.

"Your daughter," said the speaker of the two, "is growing very weak from grief. The choicest dainties are prepared for her, but she will not partake of them. The gentlest care is shown her, yet each day she grows more pale."

"Oh, why," asked Mr. Alleyn, "will your leader neither accept my offer nor name one himself? I will wait yet a little longer for the young American before I lose all hope. He has now been gone many days."

"Do you mean the young man who was slain a few days ago in the mountain pass where your daughter was taken from you?"

"What? Do you tell me he has been slain? What was he like?" And the description was so like Edward that Mr. Alleyn could but exclaim, "It is he. Oh, why should he have risked his life? Far rather had I paid the last farthing of my fortune than that for my sake he had done this, and to no purpose! I will wait no longer."

Now these men had come with instructions to accept Mr. Alleyn's last offer, but thinking to add to it a few pounds more for themselves, had made the situation much worse than it was. They did not tell the anxious father that since the coming of two minstrels to the bandit camp that their daughter had gained new life and was quite her own self again. This they kept from him, but said:

"The terrible (he was always terrible) leader is now ready to make settlement, but he will accept no such paltry sum as you have offered." "Paltry," and had not Barrone spoken of it as the "ransom for a king?" and still it had been added to one thousand pounds and yet was paltry!

"I can go only so far," sadly spoke the father, "and that is to add £5,000 to what I have already offered." The surprise to the men was so great they were unable to speak for some moments.

"If that is the limit of your offer we will take it upon ourselves to accept, but much fear it may displease the amiable (he is now the amiable) leader. This which we may say can but rejoice your heart. The exchange is to be made to-morrow afternoon at exactly 3 o'clock. But mark you this, 'if there is the least sign of duplicity'—so the message reads—'suspected, instant death to the maiden.' We may not tell you where it will be made, but we will call for you in the forenoon." Mr. Alleyn could not for some minutes fully realize what he had heard the men say. Could they mean that he was going to clasp again his darling child to his breast? No, that were a hope too great. He asked them again, that he might be certain he had not mistaken their words, but he had truly heard aright.

"May I call to her mother and tell her the great joy? Wife, wife, come and hear that we are again to see our lost child. To-morrow—to-morrow we are to meet her." And they clasped each other in fond embrace, and wept for very joy.

"Oh, Charles, I fear something may happen to prevent those awful men fulfilling their promise."

"No, good lady," spoke the solicitor. "These bandits are most honorable men—most honorable men, my good lady. They may be rough and wild in their manners—rough and wild—but they are the very soul of honor—the very soul of honor." And the little man rubbed his hands, thinking of the extra share his shrewd bargaining would bring him, as he knew "their very soul of honor" could not wring for them a centime more than the extra thousand pounds which the leader had authorized him to accept. "Four thousand pounds," and as he had done all the bargaining, he would allow five hundred pounds of it to the other solicitor, "and pay him well—pay him well—and he nothing to do but listen to me talk."

"As to the possibility of any duplicity," said Mr. Alleyn, "I would not risk my daughter's life to punish your band, even did I know I might capture every one of them. No, there will be no duplicity. And as there will be a number of your men present, and no possible danger to them, I beg that you will allow me to bring with myself and wife two friends. You may examine all of us carefully before we start, to see that no arms are secreted."

"Oh, no objections—no objections in the world. I will be there and see that our men are fully protected! No objections to your two friends, as I know it will appear more comfortable to feel that you are not alone." And the little man flitted about the room as he conducted the arrangements, ever and anon stopping to rub his hands and to brush back from his forehead a stray spear of gray hair, which, owing to his energetic movements, would continually drop down across his face. "Now I am off—off—till the morrow. Remember, any duplicity, 'certain death to the maiden.' A word, a look, an act may mean death to the maiden; beware of duplicity. Our men are the soul of honor and can brook nothing but most honorable treatment in return. Adieu—yes, the soul of honor!"

Mr. Alleyn sent a messenger to Professor Blake, and the American consul, asking them to hasten at once to his hotel on very urgent business. They came together and were surprised to find the almost smiling looks of Mr. and Mrs. Alleyn.

"And what good news can you have heard?" asked the consul. "Your faces tell us that we have not been called to hear of sadness."

"Oh, that what has been told us may be true! We are promised our daughter to-morrow—to-morrow! And we want you and the professor here to go with us."

"Is there any danger?" asked the professor. The consul smiled and promised that between them they would try to see that no harm would befall him.

"I, too, have a matter to speak of. You are aware, Mr. Alleyn, that the young American who was slain in the mountain pass was most certainly Mr. Edward DeHertbern, of New York city. The description is so exact that there is scarce a possibility of mistake. I have this day received a message from Mr. DeHertbern's father, who is a personal friend of mine, to the effect that I spare neither men nor money to find his son, either dead or living. Knowing that this would be his wish, I had sent out ten of the most trusted men I could find, on that mission, the very hour I was convinced that the unfortunate young man was Edward, and they were well on their way long before the message came. The professor and I will be here at the time you name in the morning."

The rest of that day Mr. Alleyn occupied himself in collecting together the gold, in which the bandits had demanded the ransom should be paid. He had drawn from London, and from Paris, and from every available source, as the amount agreed upon was a very great one. By night everything was in readiness.

At 9 o'clock the next morning the consul and Professor Blake were promptly on time, but the two solicitors were late. They had held another meeting already that morning, and a most serious one it was. They were aroused from sleep at a very early hour by Fulco and Barritzo, who, having called for them at their two homes, were told they must be at their office, where they at times slept. The little solicitor, at sight of the two worn-out bandits, could scarcely speak, so great was his surprise. Without waiting a moment, Barritzo began:

"We are undone. Amabilli is dead. Barrone is dead, and I fear the maiden, too, is dead." He hurriedly told of the escape of their prisoner with the minstrels, and how Amabilli had planned for her recapture. "When," he continued, "I could find no trace of them to the south of the camp, the two men and I returned and followed in the direction we supposed they had gone. What was our horror to find our giant leader and Barrone dead in the west path, slain by the seven men. The five armed men who had been seen at the hamlet inn must have gone away around to the west, and at the moment of the prisoner's escape were coming up and met the fleeing minstrels with the maidens, and, by the united forces of the seven men, our leader fell, and with him Barrone. We looked all about to find the dead who must have fallen by the mighty sword of Amabilli, whose arm had never known a victor, but we could find none. We are sure the survivors have hidden them away in the rocks. Five must have been slain or badly wounded, as we saw but two going away with the maiden. We feared to follow far, lest by some chance all of the five had not been slain and might be lying in ambush for us, and, as they were known to be armed with guns, they must have slain us without a chance of defending ourselves. We ran a short distance and called loudly to the fleeing minstrels to stop, and, when they gave no heed, I fired after them, taking most careful aim, in hope to avenge our leaders. The moment I fired the poor maiden fell. Hardened as I am, I could but regret that shot, as it gained us nothing and must have mortally wounded an innocent lady. And now, counsellor, what is to be done? We cannot produce the maiden, and can get no part of the ransom we have worked so long to gain."

"And what say you, my brother solicitor?"

"As Barritzo says, there is nothing to do. Our work and planning is for naught. We cannot produce the daughter to receive the father's gold. We had as well stop at once."

"And you would all stop at this point, would you?" asked the little solicitor, rubbing his hands and chuckling. "Ah, my friends, there is nothing so great as a great mind. I will now take the part of your leader, and in one day gain the gold, gold, gold. Ha! ha! what a pretty word, and so easy to gain when one has a mind great enough to know the way. Listen to my plan. It is so simple, I wonder that you, Fulco, or even you, my brother solicitor, had not thought of it—so simple, so very simple. Do you follow my plan? Ah, 'tis well, 'tis well. I knew when once I explained to your simple minds——"

"But, brother, what is your plan?"

"Ho! ho! 'tis so simple. I thought you had caught it ere I had told it you. Continue to listen. By train to Lecco—old house, big room—solicitor and I waiting with three men, one woman and satchel of gold. Men unarmed; Barritzo and Fulco rush in and say:

" 'Sorry, but could not bring daughter to-day. She sends regrets. We will take the gold—bring daughter next time;' rush out; I will force three men, one woman into wine cellar, lock the door, fix hinges—and then we will divide the gold. For the part you three take I will give each of you £500."

"But, solicitor, £500 is but a very little of the ransom."

"And you forget that but for my great mind you had not received even that little! You had all given up and would stop. Come, come; unless you agree to this division I, too, will stop. *You see, I have to divide my share with a friend.*" And, like many another since, "who had a friend to divide with," his "division" was agreed to.

CHAPTER XLV.

Two dark figures intercept them with blows from heavy sticks.

"Ah, Mr. Alleyn and gentlemen, we are late, very late, but in good time for the train. My brother here was slow stirring this morning. I had come from my home and was awaiting him at the office. I am sorry, Mr. Alleyn, to put you under the painful humiliation of being searched for arms, but you know my friends are the very soul of honor—soul of honor, and I do not dare risk any harm coming to them."

No arms were found, as Mr. Alleyn had explained the condition on which he was allowed to take his two friends, and, of course, they had complied. Arms to the professor would have been dangerous only to himself or friends, so 'twas as well he was not permitted to carry them.

They reach Lecco at 2 o'clock, have dinner, and shortly before 3 are driven in two carriages to the old house, whose wine cellar is better known to us than the house itself. The two drivers remain in their carriages while the two little solicitors, Mr. and Mrs. Alleyn and their two friends go to the big room.

With what anxiety they enter! "Will they have long to wait?"

"How will their dear child look? Will she show the terrible ordeal through which she had passed?" Questions like these flew through their minds with the quickness of thought as they waited. The room is large, almost like a great old reception hall, with doors leading from it into other rooms.

"We are here, solicitor, and trust your friends will not long delay their coming. Our anxiety is great to again behold our child, after these days of terrible waiting."

"'Tis strange, most passing strange, they do not come. They are the very soul of honor, and promised to be here on the stroke of three, and 'tis now seven minutes past. But they must come shortly. They will not break their word—soul of honor, very soul of honor!"

Just then the outer door opened, and the two drivers entered—not drivers now, but bandits. All the assumed meekness of the driver is gone, and in its place their natural fierce manner. They came boldly into the room and stalked across to where Mr. Alleyn and his friends stood, and, without any preliminary words, Barritzo began the speech the little solicitor had prepared for him:

"Sorry we could not bring your daughter to-day. We will bring her next time. We will take the gold——"

"Stay!" cried Mr. Alleyn. "Is this your soul of honor?"

"No, no," exclaims the little man; "methinks they may have left that behind, too, to-day—bring it next time. Ha! ha!"

"You cannot have the ransom until you bring our child!" exclaimed the father.

"We will take the gold!" gruffly growled Barritzo, "and as for your child, we will never bring her. We cannot, as she was killed in her attempt to escape." He and Fulco rush for the satchel of gold, but never reach it. Two dark figures intercept them with blows from heavy sticks. The rustle of a dress is heard, and Nita rushes into the arms of her mother. Oh, what joy is theirs! Almost too great! One moment of despair at the treachery of the bandits, and the next in loving embrace of a daughter they had given up hope of ever seeing again. The two solicitors seemed not to enjoy the sight, and were about to depart, when the two minstrels called: "Stay, we will need you."

"This is all the result of your great mind," almost whimpered the dull solicitor to his brighter (?) brother. "It never does to be too brilliant of thought, brother. I will and bequeath to you my £500 share. It is very small, 'tis true, but all you would allow to me. Ask Barritzo and Fulco. They, too, may give you their share. You deserve it, as 'twas your 'great mind' that planned it all—your great mind!" But before the little man of "honor" could reply, four stalwart men entered the room and took charge of the prisoners. "From whence came these stalwarts?" No one at that moment could tell, unless it was the consul, whose eyes took on a merry twinkle as they entered.

It was a happy party that rode back to Milan that evening. The days of anxiety were past. Terrible as had been the ordeal, it was now at an end.

Edward's first act was to send a message home, to relieve the anxiety there, the consul having told him that he was mourned as dead.

There was so much to relate that long after Miss Alleyn's return home many things would recur to her mind, and no circumstance was too small to be of interest to her father and mother, who now worshiped her anew as one from the dead. They might have noticed that in the whole story of her release only one minstrel played any part in it. "When Edward had slain the powerful leader, and we were hurrying away, three others of the bandits came up. They ran toward us, calling loudly for us to stop. Edward heeded them not, but hurried on. My nerves were in the highest tension when one of the bandits fired a shot after us. I fell in a faint, as though I had been struck. 'Twas well for them that they came no further, else Edward had slain them all, as he had slain their giant leader. So valiant a swordsman I have never seen as Edward."

The following day, after their return to Milan, Edward called at the hotel of the Alleyns. He was a welcome guest. Was it gratitude alone that made his welcome so hearty?

"Mr. DeHertbern," said Nita, later on during his call, "we have known each other but a few days, and yet I seem to have seen and known you before—when or where I cannot tell. Often in the camp of the bandits your face impressed me as one I had known long ago."

"Miss Alleyn," began Edward, pleased at this speech, "have you ever seen a face somewhere that came and went in a day, and you knew not from whence it came or whither it went?"

"Only one, and that face I may never see again." Her cheeks colored at the reply "It did not impress me at the time, but it had scarce gone from my vision when the remembrance of it came back and has never left me. I remember it only as a face; the outlines are gone, and I would not recognuize it were I to see it again. It is like the "almost remembered face" in Lucile. I have been in many lands since then, but never until in the camp of the bandits did I see a face that even reminded me of it. When you came as a minstrel my mind flew back to the Egyptian tomb where first I saw that face. You know it is said that every face has its counterpart somewhere in the world. Your counterpart must have been in Egypt a year ago, else I could not have been so moved at sight of the 'minstrel.' "

"Tell me, Miss Alleyn," said Edward, "what if you could see and know that face?"

"Ah! I know not. A mere sight may infatuate, while knowing well may disenchant. Have you known Count Drasco long?"

"Somewhat more than a year. I met him in New York, while he was visiting in America."

"Professor Blake is an American, is he not?"

"No, I believe he is English; at least so the Count has told me." Edward felt almost that he was doing a wrong in the part he was acting, but he would win her love without any aids. Did he tell her that his was the face she had sought for a year, that, with the gratitude which she naturally felt toward him, might influence her against her own heart, and he would win that heart for himself alone.

"I have often wondered," said Miss Alleyn, "why you should have taken an interest in my rescue—I, a stranger to you!"

"I am an American," Edward replied, "and when one of my countrywomen is in danger I feel it is my duty to rescue her."

"I am not an American," she said, "although most of my life was passed in that country."

"You are not an American! Why should I have so thought? I have had that impression, and I think the Count has the same."

"No. I was born in England and went to America as a child, and remained there until four years ago. These four years I have spent in school in Paris and in travel."

Although Edward remained some time, their conversation was of a commonplace order. His was a delicate situation. He did not dare presume on the part he had played in Miss Alleyn's rescue, and yet the promptings of his heart were to urge his suit. He could not think of her as a friend of the few days he had known her, but the friend of a whole year.

Edward went direct to the Consul's office, where he was met with a cordial greeting. "Ah, Mr. DeHertburn, glad to see you! I was intending to look you up. I suppose you have heard that the little solicitor is making great efforts to get on this side of his prison door? No? Oh, yes. No less than five of Milan's prominent men have been to see me in his behalf. Some of them are almost insolent in their request that he be released without delay. They claim that he is entirely innocent of any knowledge of the bandits and that he had gone with the two as a legal advisor on a matter which they would explain to him at Lecco. I have, on the other hand, most positive evidence that, under the guise of their legal advisor, this solicitor is, in fact, the leader of the band in Milan. Even the leader whom you—well, the leader who did not slay you, was in a manner under control of this man. I further find that this band of outlaws is far-reaching and has emissaries in all the cities of Northern Italy. The government is really anxious to break it up, as tourists are becoming fearful of traveling here. And now, if you and Mr. Alleyn will give me your support, I will agree that few of them will be left out of prison or on this side of America. Once we get them there we will make law-abiding citizens out of them. DeHertburn, great country that of ours for turning a savage bandit into a meek street sweeper, eh?"

"You may count on myself, and I am quite sure Mr. Alleyn will most heartily lend his aid to the movement."

"DeHertburn, let me show you a sword that one of my men took from the big bandit yesterday at Lecco. He brought it here this morning. Isn't that a fine one? Notice the carving."

"And see," said Edward, "this coat of arms on the hilt. Had not noticed it? Some unfortunate tourist, no doubt!"

"Tourists," said the Consul, "are not in the habit of carrying swords about the country with them. This one must have belonged to no ordinary personage. I have seldom seen so fine a blade or one of so elegant mounting. This morning the men I sent to get the particulars of your 'assassination' returned. They bring but meagre word. They learned from a little priest that the only strangers who have been in the hamlet near the Pass were 'two minstrels.' When asked about the young man who was slain, he denied all knowledge of him."

"The little villain!" exclaimed Edward. "We saw this very same priest and heard him read the funeral service over the man whom the bandits spake of as an Englishman."

"An Englishman?" asked the Consul. "I will at once see the English Consul and lay the facts before him. If, indeed, he were English we will find in the Consul of that country an active ally." Edward then related to his friend all that he had learned of the young man; how that he had been slain by Amabilli and brought to the hamlet and buried near a large tree by the inn. He did not know how nearly he had come being laid himself 'neath that tree. All the time, while Edward was looking at the sword, he was asking himself: "Where have I seen this coat of arms? There is something so familiar about it that it seems not new to me." He could not recall it. In America a coat of arms means so little that one gives it but scant thought. Time and again "the raven wings, on a crown, surmounting a shield on which were mullets and bars," would come into his mind, but he could not place it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Father, if only the perfect men were chosen as husbands,
there would be but few wives.
One may almost love as a friend, and hate that friend if
forced on one as a lover.

Count Drasco owed much of social pleasure to Edward during his visit in New York, and had already laid many plans for returning these pleasures; but when he proposed them to Edward he found him in no humor for any society aside from what he could find at the hotel of the Alleyns. "I have no heart," he would say, "for anything social. I have told you how that, for the past year, I have thought only of one, and that one I felt was forever lost to me, but now that I have again found the object of my heart's longing, I can think of naught else." He was so earnest that the Count would not urge him.

Brave almost to a fault when face to face with real danger, Edward now felt himself a coward. He would know his fate, and yet feared to put to the test the means of learning it. "I may be too late," he would say to himself. "Some one else may have seen in her the one being in all this world to him, and have received from her a promise she cannot break. So much of worth and beauty cannot have been left alone for me!" He is now quite as despondent, having found the object of his search, as he was when he thought that object forever lost to him.

His was not the only yearning heart! Seated at the piano that evening we find Nita softly singing "Juanita," which had been running in her mind since that memorable night when it had brought so much of hope to her. She had forgotten in the song that her father and mother were near her. She had forgotten all else but the minstrel and his song. When her father spoke, she started, and seemed to wake as from a sleep. "Why, father," she said, "you startled me!"

"Yes, my little girl; you seemed to have been away off. Where, I wonder, could you have been that you had so forgotten us? Ah, methinks my little girl was in her English home, singing to her cousin lover."

"Father, why do you taunt me with my fate? Is it not enough to be bound to one I can never love, without being reminded of it continually?"

"You forget, my darling child, that it was the will of my father that you should marry your distant cousin, Lord Clarence Aglionby, that our two houses might again be brought together."

"No, father, I do not forget it. I cannot forget it. I lie awake far into the night thinking of the bitter fate that awaits me. Oh, why—why could your father have thus blighted my life?"

"Was it to blight your life to choose for you a husband, a man of so superior character as your Cousin Clarence? He has all the finer qualities of character that go to make the perfect man."

"Father, if only the perfect men were chosen as husbands, there would be but few wives. I would take as a husband one I could truly love far rather than the most perfect character that ever lived. The heart does not seek perfection. It seeks love. The most homely face to the eye is often the most beautiful to the heart. Clarence may be the most perfect of men in form and character, but to my heart he is the most deformed, and I can never love him."

"Nita, when first you knew of your grandfather's wishes you did not feel toward your cousin any ill. You seemed then even to like him well."

"Yes, father; but you forget that one may almost love as a friend and hate that friend if forced on one as a lover. Clarence and I could have been the best of cousins, but the moment I had to think of him as a husband I even disliked him as a cousin."

"Nita, you even liked him well until we visited Egypt, since which time you seem to have cared less and less for him, but I did not know until this night that you had such an aversion for him. My child, is there another your heart would choose?" She hesitated and did not reply. "Tell me," he urged, "if you were free to choose, is there another?"

"Yes, father, there is one to whom my very soul goes out. Without his love my life were worse than death to me."

"Who can have so won your love? Have you kept from us this secret all this while?"

"Ah, father, 'this while' is very short."

"You cannot mean Mr. DeHertbern or the Count, whom you have known so short a time?" anxiously inquired her father.

"Yes, father—it—is—Edward DeHertbern whom I love!"

"And has he dared speak to you of love?"

"No, father; he has ever kept far away from the subject, and that is why my heart oftimes feels as if it would break!"

"Come, Nita," more softly, "my little girl, you must not mistake gratitude for love. Mr. DeHertbern risked his life for you, and we all should feel very grateful to him for it."

"Father, could the feeling I had for him in the bandits' camp have been one of gratitude when I saw him as a minstrel, before I knew him as a friend, come to save me from an awful fate? That feeling was not gratitude. It was the same that now I feel and I know is love. The Count, too, helped to rescue me. If gratitude, I would feel the same toward both."

"Nita, prepare your mind to hear that which would forever prevent your marriage to Mr. DeHertbern, even though you were not already bound to Lord Aglionby. My father's will, which has said you shall marry your cousin, also says that if Clarence should die before his marriage to you that *you shall not marry an American!*"

"Does it say that? Oh, father, why should he have been so minded as to wreck your young life by act, and mine by his will! I care not now what may come! I am resigned to any fate! Oh, why was I not saved this misery? Would that the aim of the bandit had been true! I had been better dead!"

"Child, you know not what you are saying. Have you no love for us? We, who have ever tried to make your young life sweet and happy, can ill hear you speak thus."

"Mother, forgive me, but my heart seems breaking! Let us go away from here! 'Where?' Any place where I will have nothing to remind me of Edward. Oh, I must see him once more. I wish then to go back to England, and on the most remote part of your possessions hide away from the world until I will have to come out to face it as the wife of a man I can never love."

When Edward called the next day he was told that Nita was very ill. Brain fever was feared. "The strain on her mind during her captivity was too great, and she has, I fear, broken down under it," explained Mr. Alleyn.

"I am greatly surprised," said Edward, "for she seemed very well yesterday, and quite happy in being with you again." He did not dare remain, else he had broken down in Mr. Alleyn's presence. He called a number of times during the day to inquire. He could find no rest away and no comfort near, and yet he wandered back and forth all the day long. So intense became his grief at last that he felt he owed to Mr. Alleyn an explanation of his interest. So, on meeting that gentleman, he timidly began: "You must see that my interest in your daughter is not that of a mere friend. With possibly no right I have grown to love——"

"Stop, Mr. DeHertbern," broke in Mr. Alleyn, "you must go no further. I owe too much to you to allow this to continue. Nita is the promised wife of another."

Edward's greatest fears were thus harshly realized at the very moment when his grief at her sudden illness was most intense. He fain would have left Milan at once, but he could not go while Nita continued ill. He must see her once more, even though it would wring his heart to part with her. She would never know the depths of his love. He would wait until she might see him. He would say good-by as a friend and see her no more. The face which had looked out from memory upon him for a weary year had been found at last, but that face could never be his—another had claimed it.

The ills of this life seldom come alone. That day Lord Alleyn had received a letter from England stating that Lord Aglionby had left London for Paris about one month before, and that nothing had been heard from him since the day he reached that city. In that letter he spoke of having just heard that Nita had been taken captive by bandits in a certain place in Northern Italy. That is all he had said. His friends had looked for him in Paris, but could find no trace of him. This greatly worried Mr. Alleyn, as Clarence had never been one of those travelers who come and go without any word to their friends at home. He had always kept them informed just where he was, and four weeks away, and no word, was alarming! Mr. Alleyn would see his English Consul at once and advise with him as to what should be done. As he entered that gentleman's office he was greeted with: "Glad to see you, Mr. Alleyn. I was on the point of going to your hotel on a very important matter. It has just reached my ears that one of our countrymen has met his death almost in the same place that your daughter was taken. I had heard of this at the time, but you will remember it was reported that the young man was an American. I did, however, dispatch five men to investigate the affair, but they returned and said they could learn nothing whatever of the matter. I have just heard, from the American Consul, that when the two bandits were taken, along with the two solicitors, at Lecco, that a beautiful sword was found on one of the prisoners. Whether it will be of any aid to us, I do not know, but the Consul left it with me. Here it is. It is a magnificent one."

At that moment Mr. Alleyn caught sight of the coat of arms on the hilt. "My worse fears are true! See this coat of arms? It is that of our family, and the young man is none other than Lord Clarence Aglionby, who, I have just heard, has been gone from his home for a month. What further did you learn?"

"You have heard, no doubt," replied the Consul, "from Count Drasco and the American all that they knew about the young man whom they saw buried at the inn near the pass? You have heard them speak nothing of the affair? You will do well to see them without delay. I believe they saw the young man and may be able to describe him to you. We will hope their account will prove to you that your fears are unfounded."

Mr. Alleyn went directly to the Count's home, where he met Edward. He began at once his sad inquiry. So deep had been the impression made on their minds at sight of the young man at the hamlet inn that they could describe him as though looking on a picture, and when they had concluded, Mr. Alleyn had no longer a doubt.

"It is he—poor Aglionby! What did you learn in connection with the sad affair?"

"We learned that he had been slain at the fateful mountain pass," said the Count, "by Amabilli, the bandit leader, whom we met just after the tragedy. The body was brought directly to the inn, but we did not learn of it until very late in the night. Edward's surprise was so great on hearing of it that the interest he manifested came near resulting in one or two more tragedies. They became very suspicious of us. Was he an Englishman, as was thought?"

"Yes, and a dear relative of our family. Have you described to the Consul the exact location of his grave?"

"Yes, most fully, and have advised him of all our observations. He, with the coöperation of our American Consul, will leave nothing undone to avenge the death of your friend."

Mr. Alleyn at once sent the sad news back to England. He also sent to his lawyers for a copy of his father's will, as he remembered that there was in it a codicil touching on the event of Lord Aglionby's death; certain estates left him should revert to Clarence's brothers. He was not sure as to the wording of it, and it might be necessary for him to return to England, which he could not do while Nita was so ill. On his return to the hotel he found her much worse. She did not know him. "Go away. I will not have to fulfill my part. I will soon be free—free as a bird, to fly away. Grandfather thought to bind me here, but I will not stay—will not stay," and her mind ran on in wild wanderings. "Yes, Edward, I am going. I will wait for you, as I have long waited for the unknown face. They may bind me here, but not there—not there. Oh, the bandits! the bandits! Too late! They have taken me again, but Edward will come for me. He will sing again for his Nita. He will know his Nita now. He did not know her then, and yet he sang to Nita. Our hearts knew each other—our hearts." She would sleep, and start up and cry out as though she were again a captive. She seldom would speak any name but Edward's. His name was ever on her lips. Her father and mother were grief-stricken, as the days went by, at the thought of her death. The physicians gave them no hope.

"The strain on her mind during her captivity was great," said the attendant physician, "but you say she seemed well on her return? There must then be another cause, or rather an assistant cause. Has anything occurred since her return that would in any way give her worry? It need have been but slight, as her mind although apparently normal, needed but little to cause this result." He had followed his question with an explanation, and they not replying at once, he did not press them for an answer; but they knew too well the cause. One day when Nita appeared to be almost gone, the doctor asked, "Who is Edward, whom she continually talks about?"

"He is one of the young men of whom I told you, who had rescued her from the camp of bandits."

"It is our last hope. Have him come at once, and if for a moment her mind should come back and she see him here, she may rally. Lose no time, as even now I fear it is too late!" Edward, who now spent all of his time near-by, was hastily summoned. She did not recognize him. She continually talked on about the camp. "He sang to Nita, though he did not know Nita. He will sometime know Nita—sometime. They won't marry me to Clarence now. I am so happy—so happy—I will soon go away—away off—away! Oh, Edward, save me—the giant bandit!"

"Nita! Nita! here I am!"

"His voice—oh, papa—his voice. I heard him call to me. He will save me, papa. The will says I may never be his, but I will love him always, always. I will wait for him—wait for him—wait—for my Edward!"

"Too late," softly spoke the doctor. "I feared it. Had I known in time we might have saved her. Hold! there is a faint pulse yet, very, very faint. If her mind could only rest she might yet live." From that moment she went off into a gentle sleep, the first restful sleep for many days. The next morning a slight change for the better was noticed, and once or twice during the day her mind returned for a few moments. During these lucid intervals she spoke but little. She seemed very sad. At one time she said to the nurse: "Oh, why did they bring me back? I thought I had gone, and I was so happy!"

She was slightly better next day, but that awful sadness clung to her, and she would continually repeat, "Why did they bring me back?" "Nurse, have I been very ill?"

"Yes, Nita, you were quite ill, but you will soon be well again."

"Nurse, I do not want to get well. I have nothing to live for; I were happier gone!"

"Come, come, my little patient must not talk so. You will soon be well, and then you will be very happy again."

"Nurse, I will never be happy again!"

"Come, now, go to sleep." She spoke to her as to a little child. The nurse was very gentle, but very indiscreet, as when Nita asked, "Nurse, has there been any one here while I was ill whom they called Clarence?" she answered, "Why, if it is your cousin you mean, he is dead!"

"Dead! My cousin Clarence dead? Oh, tell me about him." And the nurse repeated all she had heard from first to last.

When next the doctor called he found his patient so much improved that he could but remark the change.

"Oh, doctor," said Nita, "I really believe I am going to get well. I don't know why, doctor, but the world seems so much brighter to me to-day. Was I very ill, doctor?"

"Yes, you were quite ill for a time, Nita, but I will soon have you well and happy."

"Yes, doctor, I feel that I will be well and very happy again. Doctor, is this a brighter day than usual? I don't know why, but it does seem so to me. I am very weak, I know, but I just feel as though I could get up and walk about."

Mrs. Alleyn remarked to her husband that evening: "Dr. Herman is certainly a most remarkable physician! Have you noticed how Nita has improved since his last visit? The change is marvelous! The nurse tells me that all that despondency is gone, and that Nita never exclaims, as she has all along, 'Oh, why did they bring me back!' The nurse says she has never seen so remarkable a recovery. Charles, do you think we could mention Clarence's sad taking off to her?"

"My dear, I am surprised that could ask that question. Why, in her weak state of mind it would surely bring on a return of the fever, and you know what a relapse is!"

"Forgive me. I see it would never do."

CHAPTER XLVII.

When the heart is glad, the eye sees naught but the beautiful, and the ear hears nothing that is not pleasing.

In a few days Nita was so far recovered that she could ride out with her father and mother. On their first drive they met Edward. He had not seen her since her recovery. Nita involuntarily called to the driver to stop. "Mr. DeHertbern, we are so glad to see you! I am almost well again. I feel like a little child, this bright morning. It has been so long since I was out that I quite thoroughly enjoy the drive. You must run in to see us."

"I propose returning to America shortly."

"Oh, no, Edw—Mr. DeHertbern, I mean; we cannot allow you to go for a long while yet. Just to think of it! The bandits might capture me again, and who could rescue me as you did?"

"Oh," laughed Edward, "in case they should want you to brighten their camp again, send me word and I will sail across and deliver you back to Milan, but I will not go as a minstrel the next time. They will never again trust a minstrel, however despondent their captive maidens may become."

"Come, then," said Nita, "as a knight errant!"

"Seeking his fair lady?" inquired Edward—hardly thinking of the full meaning of the question.

"Yes, with a hope of her rescue. We will look for you this evening."

And they drove away, Nita smiling back at him with a look he had never before seen on her face.

And yet this was she who was to be the bride of another! Edward could not understand. In her delirium she had spoken of "Clarence;" he it must be who is the "another." That she does not love that other he knew, and that she does love himself Edward is convinced. "She spoke of a will, and that it said she could never be mine; how could anyone know me. Ah! it was but the wild fancies of a delirious mind! Her father has told me that she is to be another's! I will go away. Why remain here? It were a kindness to her that she see me no more if she love me; and if she can never be mine, why remain where I must see the object I can never hope to gain? I will see her once more, and then bid goodby to Milan and all that it holds dear to me." And the same old sadness was on his face.

Edward had told the Count that he would soon go back to America. The Count asked not why, for he knew, as Edward had told him that Nita could never be his; that she was to be the bride of another.

Nita was in her best spirits that evening. Her carriage drive had started again the color in her cheeks. The world seemed to have taken on a brighter hue; the flowers were more brilliant, the birds in the parks had sweeter notes, and appeared happier in their songs than she had ever before heard them. The people whom they met, even the tired workmen on their way home seemed more joyous than she had ever remembered seeing them. Ah! when the heart is glad the eye sees naught but the beautiful, and the ear hears nothing that is not pleasing.

Was it the drive alone that had started that color tingling into her cheek again? Was it that she had recovered from her serious illness that caused her heart to feel so light? Could it not have been that she felt the release from a marriage so wholly saddening to her? And yet, even though she were released from a union that could never bring her a day's happiness, she still could not marry the one whom she could love, as that awful will said no American could be her husband. While Nita sat waiting for Edward, happy and yet at times sad in her contemplations, her father came in, holding a voluminous paper in his hand.

"Nita," said he, "I have just received from England a copy of my father's will, and in it I find a strange wording at the point referring to you, where you are prohibited marrying an American; there is what is called a codicil, something thought of after the body of the will had been written. Listen to what it says: that you may marry an American under certain conditions, only in the event of Lord Clarence Aglionby's death. Those conditions are that if an American, who can trace a true line back to our family tree, should ask your hand in marriage he may be accepted. It also says that the estate which was to have gone to Lord Clarence Aglionby "shall go to the husband of my beloved granddaughter Anita."

"Why, father," said Nita, "he had as well left off that codicil. In the first place, the Americans are so proud of their own country that they claim no family tree which was not grown on American soil. In the second place, they do not keep records as you in England keep them. And, thirdly, as the minister would say, did your father think that I should ever meet and love the possible one in the thousands of families in America? I had always thought of my dear old grandfather as a man very sedate, very, very serious, yet he must have had in him a large vein of humor to put into not only his 'last will and testament' but in the very end of it, a bit of humor that would be quite amusing if it were not so serious to me in its results. I wish you had not spoken to me of this."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"When in thy dreaming moons like these shall shine
again,
And daylight beaming prove thy dreams are vain,
Wilt thou not, relenting, for thine absent lover sigh,
In thy heart consenting to a prayer gone by?"

Edward, too, had that day received an important letter. It was from his sister, Beatrice. She had much to tell him of all the family, each member coming in for a small notice, with much of the rest devoted to Bill, but what interested Edward most was what Beatrice said of an old maid aunt, who was then visiting at his home in New York. The letter, referring to the aunt, said: "Aunt Samantha is here. She came up from Kentucky a few days after you went away. She is just as queer as ever, always fussing about family trees and 'coats of arms' and 'escutcheons,' and I don't know what all that is odd. She says we were once a great family in England. I am satisfied with our present family. She made me use her writing paper. She says what is the good of having a 'coat of arms' without wearing it. 'It' is one of aunt's jokes; she calls it 'it,' then laughs and explains it: 'coat—wear it. See? Ha, ha.' She is old and childish, so we all try to humor her, but really, Ed, she says this is our coat of arms. She has the longest list of names. Why, she can run back for generations, and has old papers, books and things to prove all she says. We often ask what good is all this, and she laughs and says: 'Oh, it's no trouble to me, and it may come useful some time; we never know.' Say, Ed, you have no idea of all the fuss the papers are just now making over you and the Count, who rescued that English girl. Why, one of them had you all pictured out. You were fighting five men at once, while the Count, who had just killed two bandits, was sitting there watching you. Ed, they were wood cuts, and if you looked just a little bit like your picture I would disown you. Everybody is asking me how you came to be there, in the bandit country. I tell them all I know; that you had gone to Milan to visit Count Drasco, and when they ask why you and the Count were minstrels, I say: I guess it was because you wanted to see the country of the bandits, and thought the safest way to go was as minstrels. Now, there, Ed, wasn't that a brilliant idea of mine? Bill says he couldn't have thought of it himself.

"The girls say: 'The first thing you know, that brother of yours will lose his heart to that English girl.' Ed, really now, is she as beautiful as all the papers say? Your New York girls are getting real jealous of her already. Miss Kittie—you know who I mean—asked me yesterday: 'Beatrice, when is your brother Edward coming home? Wasn't his going rather sudden?' Say, Ed, you should have heard Kit ask the question. She was very serious! She called you 'Edward.' Think, Ed, of Kittie calling you 'Edward.' She acted as though your going were any of her affair. Oh, when are you coming home? You have been gone two ages! Ed, when you were 'assassinated' we all cried for a week; then we found it wasn't you, but the cry did us good. You know, we girls have to cry so much each year, anyhow. Now I will not have to weep for two years to come. So you see what we think of our big, 'giant killer' brother. Helen, when she reads now, gets down her book, and it's all about 'Ed, the Giant Killer.' 'Jack' plays no part any more. Say, Ed, just for fun, give my love to my new sister. I always was a tease, so you must forgive me this. Here is Aunt Samantha, who sends so many messages to you that if I wrote them all out you would grow tired reading them. You know, Ed, she is very rich. Father says she has spent thousands of dollars tracing out our family. Bill says it's hard to tell whether she has been running a nursery or the timber business; at any rate, 'Trees' have figured largely in her life. You should see her room; she has family trees from the size of this sheet on which I am writing up to one that covers half of one side of her room. 'Yes, aunt, I will tell him.' She wants me to say she wishes you were here; that she knows you would be interested in her life work. I don't believe she thinks we take much interest in it. Don't tell her I said so, but she is right: we don't. There are too many other things of importance to think of. 'What is it, auntie?' What do you think, Ed; she has just made me promise that I will send you a book in which our family is shown as running back to William the Conqueror. She says she had a man at work on it for two years. Most of that time he spent in England. When you write, Ed, you must make a 'fuss' over it. I know it will please the dear old soul. It may bore you, but she is old, and, as it is the sole object of her life, we must look over it in her."

And Edward had received the book. He hardly gave it a passing glance. Beatrice was right. It was a bore to him; but he would write some nice things to tell Aunt Samantha and thank her for her remembering him.

It was time now that he should make his promised call. He wished it was over. He was afraid of himself—afraid he might forget that Nita was another's, and say things he would regret. No, he would talk only on the commonplaces, and not risk dangerous ground. Did lover ever talk only commonplace in the presence of her whom he loved, even though he knew she was another's? Not when that lover knew that he was the one loved.

Never had he seen Nita so beautiful as she was that night. Her dress, the surroundings, the light shaded to bring out all the charm of coloring, her manner toward him, everything went to make him forget all else than that he was completely enchanted. He forgot commonplace the moment he entered her presence.

"And is my fair lady waiting to be rescued again?"

"For a whole hour has she waited, and it has seemed very long to her."

"Her knight wished not to manifest unseemly haste."

"Unseemly haste can never be charged to her knight." And thus they ran on smilingly.

"Mr. DeHertbern, you have never told me why you and the Count played so well the part of knight errants of old to me, a stranger to you."

"And are you a stranger to me?"

"I was then. You had never even seen me before."

"My counterpart may have seen you, and I but took his place, perhaps."

"If so, you have done him credit."

"Tell me again of my counterpart. What was he like?"

"I have told you that I could not describe him."

"And yet you saw him?"

"I saw him, and I did not see him. We were together in the depths of an Egyptian tomb. The surroundings were so strange and weird that I could think, at the time, of naught but their very weirdness."

"And did he see you, behind your veil?"

"What, Mr. DeHertbern, can you know of the veil?"

Edward had forgotten the part he was playing, but he tried to correct the misstep.

"Were you not veiled in that terrible climate?"

"Oh, yes; but not in the tomb."

"Tell me more of that meeting. For my counterpart's sake, I would know all."

"There is but little to relate that I have not told you."

"You have said that while you had no remembrance of the face, yet you have sought to find it again. How did you hope to find that of which you had no remembrance?"

"Ah, Mr. DeHertbern, I know not, yet would I seek it."

"Will you forgive me if I ask why you should seek that face, when it can never be to you more than a face, since you yourself are another's?"

"Mr. DeHertbern, you speak in riddles. I am not another's."

"You are not another's? Why, your father has told me that you are to be the wife of a countryman of yours."

"Poor Clarence is no more. He met the fate which you so nearly met."

"And was it Lord Aglionby, the unfortunate young man?"

"It was he. He, too, sought to rescue me, as I have learned. And, lest you think me unkind to seem so soon to forget him, I will tell you that it would have been a union without a heart. In England the woman too often has no choice."

Edward now felt that he could reveal himself, and tell her that there was no counterpart.

"And tell me again, what if you could meet and know that face you met in the tomb?"

"I have a thousand times asked myself that same question, and can find no answer, and yet have ever sought to find it!"

"If I could reveal to you the mystery, might I claim the reward?"

"I do not understand—'mystery?' 'reward?' No, I cannot fathom your meaning."

"You told me once that you saw in the minstrel that face. You saw aright, for, Nita, it was my face you saw in the Egyptian tomb!"

"Oh, cruel, cruel fate!" exclaimed Nita, her face almost white with the excitement of the revelation. She had sought for a year to find a face which, when found, brought her only grief. Edward could not understand the cause of her exclamation, but waited.

"Oh, Edward, what can I do? The fate that bound me to one I did not love bars my heart from where it would go. I can never know you save as a friend who has risked his life to save mine, a friend for whom I would willingly give my life. You cannot understand. The will that bound me to Lord Aglionby also says I may never be yours, for you are an American, and I can never marry an American." And to show to him how fate had shut them out from each other, she went and brought the will, and they read together the fatal part.

"But see," said Edward, "this codicil."

"Yes, I have seen it, and aside from the impossible there is nothing in it."

"Wait," said he, as he thought of Aunt Samantha's book, which he had with him. "I have this day received a letter and a book from my sister. The impossible may be made possible. We will see." And together they sat and looked over that book as no one had ever before looked it over.

"Why, there," said Nita, "at the very first page is our coat of arms. And here, see, name after name which are familiar ones to me.

"Come, father, see this wonderful book that Edward has received."

As Mr. Alleyn came in, the greatest surprise was to hear his daughter calling Mr. DeHertbern "Edward," but when he saw the book and realized what it contained, he could scarcely believe so wonderful a thing could be.

He saw that Burke had never written or compiled one more accurate.

It was fully agreed that there was no bar now. Edward might claim his "queen," and Nita need search no longer in vain for the "face" she had seen in the tomb.

Taking up Nita's guitar, Edward sang the one chorus he had left out the night of the last "concert" in the bandit camp:

"Nita, Juanita, let me linger by thy side;
Nita, Juanita, be my own fair bride."

CHAPTER XLIX.

The spacious DeHertbern mansion was far too small, and the greatest hotel in the city was engaged for the occasion.

Now that every obstacle has been removed, and Edward and Anita are happy in each other's love, you will scarcely wish to go with them back to the Alleyn ancestral halls in England, where they were quietly married, or to follow them across to New York, where was given to them a royal welcome, or to read of the many pretty things said of Edward's beautiful bride. Suffice it that all these things happened in their order. The reception given by the DeHertberns in honor of their new daughter was an event which New York has not yet forgotten, as no reception in this city of great affairs has equaled it in magnificence. Nothing was talked of for a month before in the higher social circles but the DeHertbern reception, and it long remained a theme of general comment.

A description of its grandeur would take a pen more used than mine to such work.

The spacious DeHertbern mansion was far too small, and the greatest hotel in the city was engaged for the occasion. Florists and decorators were many days at work in turning this great house into a veritable palace of flowers. The best orchestras were engaged to furnish the music. The guests, even though so used to the beautiful in elaborate entertainment, had never seen anything of the kind, for nothing on so vast a scale had before been attempted in America. Guests were there from almost every large city in the land. During the whole night I felt as one turned loose in fairyland. It was the first reception of any kind I had ever seen. I was at a loss to know how to fully enjoy it. The night the "Actor" took me to the theatre I was bewildered by the "diamonds" worn by the "fairies" on the stage. To me the jewels were real, as was the play, but the Actor, far too practical, said: "Those illusive baubles are but glass—and Pittsburg glass at that." He called it "glahs." But here I wandered from room to room, from floor to floor, and back again, and wherever I went diamonds dazzled my eyes. Diamonds, whole mines of them, it seemed, sparkled everywhere that night, and real ones, too, for Bill told me. "These people do not need to resort to shams. "Why," said he, "do you know, Rube, that the wealth represented here to-night would pay the national debt?" When I told the Anarchist, at the boarding-house, what Bill had said, he replied bitterly:

"If the Government had to depend upon this wealth, the debt would not be reduced much, for by the time these rich men were through 'swearing off' there would be but little left." Tom was very severe. I did not believe him—then.

Wherever I turned, in whatever room, hallway or parlor, soft, sweet music seemed to fill the very air with a joy which I had never dreamed was meant for earth. Music, music everywhere, but not a player to be seen. How different to the dances at Highmont, where the one prominent personage was the fiddler; or, if at a wedding, he might possibly share the honors with the bride—if she were pretty.

Every florist in New York had contributed his stock of roses and rare flowers, but the supply was to meagre, and other cities were called upon to complete the decoration. Grottoes of roses, bowers of palms, walls festooned with orchids—the whole one bewildering sight of rare beauty.

"What of the people who were there?" Ah, I scarcely made a note of them, save as they blocked my way through Fairyland. It seemed that I could have lived on forever, as in some "enchanted palace;" but morning came, the lights were extinguished and the guests had all departed, and I went out and took up again the burdens of real life. But the remembrance of that night still haunts me, and fills me with a pleasure untold. The flowers, the music, the diamonds that glittered on beautiful women, and, above all, was I impressed with Edward's bride, whom I had seen but once before since her arrival. Her beauty was so rare that other women forgot to envy in their admiration of her. Tall and with a bearing that seemed, to my notion, regal, and yet so gentle and simple in manner that she won every heart. Once during the evening, when Bill and I were together, he asked: "Rube, did you ever see a face that reminded you of Edward's bride?"

"No," I replied, "and never expect to."

"Well, said he, "she has features that remind me of Anita Leighton."

'What!" I exclaimed, "your Nita of Highmont? Your imagination must indeed be vivid to-night, Bill. Why, that little mountain lass could never have hoped to become the queen we see to-night."

"You mistake my meaning. I but spoke of a slight resemblance, and not that it could be Nita Leighton—only that the bride reminds me of her."

I could not but think how true it is that we never entirely forget our first love, and in after years attribute to her rare qualities of beauty in face and character.

The echoes of the DeHertbern reception rang up and down throughout the length and breadth of the land. Ministers took it as a text, and preached against the extravagance of wealth. The newspapers condemned it as ostentatious display of riches and as setting the poor against the wealthy class. Nothing was talked of at our table for a whole week. I tried to defend it, but was all alone in the defense.

"Do you know," I asked, "that all those beautiful flowers were distributed among the hospitals and sent to the poor of the city?"

"And do you think," asked Tom, "that the poor appreciate flowers cast to them as no longer of use to the millionaire? It but makes them feel the depth of their poverty to know that what would be life to them can be thrown away as useless. They feel that the God who made us all is unjust to give to the rich untold luxury and deprive them of the bare necessities of existence, and a display such as this reception but intensifies that feeling and embitters their lives. No, my friend, these poor, who dearly love flowers, who would go miles for a simple wild blossom, would trample under their feet the rarest orchid cast to them by the rich."

I learned later that Mr. DeHertbern had kept an accurate account of the money spent on this occasion, and had quietly distributed in charity a like amount. For this the world gave him no credit, for the world did not know of it.

CHAPTER L.

THE DANCE IN THE BARN.

Oh, the joy of that night! It comes back to me as an opiate dream.

"Oh, Mr. Ruben, my new sister knows the most stories!" began Helen one evening shortly after the reception, as Bill and I were entering the DeHertberns' home. "Yes, and she never gets tired telling me everything I want to know about. She is just like you and Tousin Wallie. She used to live in a wee bit of a town like you did, when she was little like I am, and, Mr. Ruben, her stories sound just like yours. Her little town was in the mountains, and had a creek, and one street and a tavern, and she told me about two little girls what had two big dogs and played with rag dolls, and hadn't any nurse. Oh, ain't it jolly to have a new sister who knows so much and likes to tell it? Oh, Mr. Ruben, when she comes in the parlor to-night you must get her to tell about a dance she went to in somebody's barn. She comes in the parlor now, since the reception, and you will see her to-night. Brother Edward said that new brides don't come in the parlor to see people before they have receptions—that's why you didn't see her before. For a long while Edward and my new sister didn't see anybody but each other, even when other people were around, too; but they are now like a smart baby, Belle says. Belle is my nurse, what papa brought from Kentucky. Her mother was a real slave that papa's uncle used to own. Yes, Belle says they are like a new baby, that is, just beginning to 'notice.' Now mind, Mr. Ruben, you mustn't tell her I told you anything. Sister Beatrice says little girls should not tell things, but you don't count, do you, Mister Ruben? No, you don't count." 'Twas always so. I don't count for anything, and thus hear many things I love to listen to.

During the evening Edward and his bride came into the parlor. We were introduced, but I am sure the bride took so little note of us that she could not have heard our names even, but later on she became so entertaining that we all stopped talking to listen to her tell of the many places and peoples she had seen.

"Tell some of the stories you told me, won't you, my new sister?"

"Now, Helen," said Beatrice, "you know what I said about little children!"

"Yes, I know; but I don't want you to hear me. I want sister to tell about when she was a little girl and lived in the little town in the big mountains and went to the dance in that new barn. Oh, it was so very funny. Now, do please tell us about it, won't you, sister?"

"Yes, yes, Helen; come over and sit by me, and I will tell you all about that dance!"

"No, I don't mean that. I want you to tell all of us about it."

"Helen, let me tell you of the little girls I saw away down in Egypt. The gentlemen will not care to hear about a simple country dance."

"Yes, they will, for they used to live in the country, too. Don't you want to hear it, Tousin Wallie? I know Mister Ruben does."

We all insisted, and the story began. She told it as though entirely for Helen's ears, but the rest were a most attentive audience.

"I once lived in a little mountain village so far removed from the outside world that all the amusements we had were the simple pleasures we could get up among ourselves. In the spring we would visit the sugar camps and pull the 'taffy' made from boiling down the sap that came from the great maple trees. It was rare sport, and much we enjoyed it. In the summer we would have picnics away off in some quiet valley in the mountains, and return home laden with wild flowers—very tired, but, Helen, we were very happy. When the summer was gone and the leaves of the forest had begun to turn all colors of red and yellow, and when the birds had started on their long flight to their winter homes, we found other amusements—the apple cuttings——"

"What's that?" broke in Helen, whose large eyes showed in their brightness how deeply she was interested.

"Why, Helen, in the country there are great orchards of apples. The trees almost break down with their heavy loads of fruit. Early in the season there are a great many windfalls——"

"Windfall!" exclaimed Helen, in surprise. "Why, sister, that is what papa called Mister Ruben. I didn't know men were apples. Sometimes a great man is called a 'peach,' but I never knew he was an apple before."

"Helen, you are a very funny little girl. No, the 'windfalls' I mean are the apples that are blown off the trees by the wind."

"Oh, I see," said Helen, satisfied with the explanation.

"These apples are picked up by the farmer. Some of them he hauls away in wagons to the mill, where they are ground and the juice is pressed out of them. This juice is what they call cider. The farmer has it put into barrels and keeps part of it to drink in the winter. It is his wine. More of it is boiled down in great copper-lined kettles, and when it is thick, almost like syrup, apples that have been cut into quarters are filled in to make a marmalade, which is called 'apple butter.' Then there is another use to which the fruit is put. The apples are pared, or, as they call it in the country, 'peeled," quartered and set in the sun, and that is how they get the dried apples. But now as to the 'apple cuttings.' Some farmer who likes to see the young people have a 'good time' sends word (he does not write a note of invitation) to everybody to come to his 'apple cutting.' This 'word' is all that is needed, and the young folks come for miles around, until the house is full. An 'apple cutting' is one of the few places where 'old maids' and quiet young men are most welcome, for they do the work while the young folks play. When the 'old maids' and sedate young men have finished the work, everything is cleared away, and a bountiful supper is spread."

"Do the 'old maids' get to eat at the 'first table'?" broke in Helen again.

"I am afraid not, Helen, for by this time their importance for the evening is over. After the supper the 'fiddler'——"

"What's that?"

"Why, Helen, in the country the man who plays the violin is called a 'fiddler.' Well, this man gets up on a barrel or some high place, and not only plays, but calls off the different sets for the dancing, and often it is time for breakfast when the young people get home.

"Then they have 'corn huskings,' which is almost like the 'apple cuttings,' only that all the young people work hard, each one of the boys hunting for the 'red ear,' and each one of the girls wishing that her young man will find it."

"Why does she wish he will find it?" asked Helen.

At this the bride blushed faintly as she replied: "Why, Helen, the young man who finds the 'red ear' gets to kiss his girl."

"Tousin Wallie, you must have found a good many 'red ears.'"

"Mamma, mamma," cried Beatrice, "make Helen be quiet. She just won't let sister tell the story."

"I have finished the story, all but the 'spelling matches,' sleighing parties and school exhibitions which they have in the long winter nights."

"Why, sister, you haven't told a word about that dance in the barn! That was the very story they all wanted to hear." And Helen pleaded so hard that finally the bride began. I need not say here with what interest I drank in every word of the recital of those country pleasures. Had I not seen them all at Highmont? But to hear this great lady tell of them as a part of her life's experience gave to them a zest I would not have thought possible. I did not then know why, but Bill's face was a picture to study. He seemed not to be present, but away off somewhere. Was he thinking, the while, that he and Anita had always attended those pleasures together; of how fast he worked at the "corn huskings" to find that "red ear," and of the reward which Anita always seemed so willing to give him? But to the story of the DANCE IN THE BARN.

"A farmer who had built a large barn a few miles from the village sent 'word' around that he would 'dedicate' it with a dance. I shall never forget the interest we took in its building. Many a load of timber the young men drew for nothing, and the farmer's wife found ready hands among the girls when she needed extra help at the 'raising.' The interest manifested in our recent reception was nothing to be compared to the great preparation for that barn dance. The stock of the village merchant was taxed to its utmost, especially the ribbon department. Some of the well-to-do sent away to the city for finery—possibly to make envious the less fortunate among their sisters. The preacher devoted half his sermon hours for weeks to tell how very, very wicked it was to dance, and especially so in a barn, but the only effect on the younger portion of his hearers was to provoke smiles. The night came at last. Could you have seen the vehicles that carried the merry party to that barn you would have laughed. The boy who took me came in a farm wagon drawn by a mule." (A start from Bill, who seemed to waken, as from a dream.) "Could you have seen how he was 'dressed' you would have thought it was for a part in a burlesque show. But I knew no difference, and was happy. The preparation the farmer had made was on a scale never before seen in that country. Great limbs of cedar covered the logs or beams, wild roses hung in festoons along the sides of the barn; golden rod—the whole eighty varieties, it seemed—covered spaces not filled with hollyhocks and sunflowers. The illumination was so brilliant that it shone out into the night for miles in every direction not shut out by the hills. He had gathered loads of pine knots, and, placing them on the four sides of the barn, set fire to them, so that the light dimmed the many lard lamps burning in the 'ball-room.'

"All the fiddlers in the country were there that night. Such music (?) I had never heard until I went to Egypt. But what cared we for the music! Our hearts were so light that we could waltz even though the fiddlers played a polka. Oh, the joy of that night! It comes back to me as an opiate dream! And yet it was not all joy. I remember how scared I was at one time. A young man from a neighboring village asked me for a waltz. I was about to accept, when the boy who brought me whispered something to him, and they went out together. They were gone a half hour when the boy came back, and such a sight he was! His eyes were almost closed, and he looked as though he had been thrown into the creek. He was very happy, however, as he told me the young man had sent word that he had reconsidered his invitation to the waltz.

"It must have been near morning when we left the dance. The mule, whether from standing or its anxiety to get home I never knew, started and ran as I have never seen a mule run before or since. The wagon box seemed a thing of life as it bounded up and down. Everything that could get loose we left strewn along the road. The boy held on to the lines and I held on to the boy, whilst the mule held the middle of the road, until we had reached a point half way to the village, when it must have thought of a nearer way home, and started across the fields, down a steep hill, at the bottom of which it found a deep ditch. Across this it jumped, but the wagon not being so light, stopped short, and for aught I know is there to this day."

"Oh, Tousin Wallie, ain't that a funny story!" From the look on Bill's face I knew he thought it anything but funny. I also knew that this great lady was none other than our own village belle, Anita Leighton!

"Sister, where is that boy now? Does he live at the little village yet?"

"No, Helen, soon after this he went away to the great city and forgot all about me. I left the little town and have never heard of him since."

"Oh, what would he think if he could see you now—

wouldn't he be sorry he forgot you?" Anita only smiled as she and Edward bid us good night and left the room.

I had never known Bill so quiet as he was on the way back to our rooms that night. Our surprise on learning that she was our own Anita was naught to be compared to hers on learning that the handsome young gentleman who had listened to her story was the boy who had taken her to the dance in the barn.

CHAPTER LI.

The proofs of the possible are the facts that exist.

Ours was a typical New York boarding house. People came and went so fast that ere long I was classed among the old boarders. Tom, the Anarchist, was still there, as were the timid young man—whom I always thought of as the "Medal" man—and the bald headed real estate broker. We three saw much of each other. The "Medal" man was now seemingly prosperous. Tom had interested him in his East Side work, and through that he was called to preach in a small mission, where he was much loved by the poor who made up his congregation.

Tom and I used often to sit and talk far into the night, for, since he learned that I was preparing for the profession of the law, he took much interest in my studies.

"You have a great work before you," he would say; "a very great work. There is no profession in which the possibilities for good are so grand, and yet there is no profession in which there is so much of evil practiced. The greatest statesmen in your country are lawyers, the greatest orators, too, are of that profession, and yet some of the most unscrupulous men are in that calling—men who would rob the widow, and turn the orphan into the cold world with scarce a coat to cover him, all under the cloak of legal right. How I long to see the time when justice may be found outside the covers of the dictionary!"

I tried to change the course of his mind, but I could not. This man who was giving up his life to the poor seemed to feel that our system was all wrong.

"You have too many and too intricate laws," he continued, not noticing my interruption. "Laws made by incompetent men. In this country the rule is to send your least able men to represent you in your assemblies and representative halls, men whose abilities, in many instances, you would not trust to try a petty case before a country 'Squire.' Your assemblies meet too often—once in two years instead of every year would be far better."

"But then," said I, "suppose a bad law be passed, it must remain on the statute books two whole years before it could be repealed."

"Ah, that is the point I wish to prove. Send men of judgment, men who cannot be paid to make a bad law, and it will not have to be repealed. In your present system every Assemblyman or Congressman feels that he is not appreciated by his constituents unless he put through a number of measures, even though these measures may have to be repealed the next year.

"I knew a Kansas Congressman who once got $20,000 appropriated to spend on trying to make the Arkansas River navigable. The money was spent with all the prodigality of public funds. Cotton wood poles were driven into the sand along the edges of the proposed channel and brush interwoven."

"Did it answer the purpose?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, he was re-elected by an increased majority, but one could wade across the river as easily as before. His constituents got the benefit of the money and said not a word, while the country either knew nothing about it or got the impression that Wichita had been made a steamboat landing, all for $20,000.

"I would have less government. Each year new offices are made, that the leaders may place their 'heelers,' as you call them. In many instances one man could fill the places of four, and then not be overworked. I know men who should still be using a pick and shovel who are drawing big salaries, simply because they can influence a certain number of votes. These men fill offices not needed for the better government of the cities, and in turn other 'heelers,' who have less influence, but more brains, are appointed to do the work of the office; and so it runs.

"Ruben, did you ever think that the one important thing of a great government is that its children should have every possible educational advantage, that its teachers should be well chosen and well paid?"

"Are they not well paid now?" I asked.

"As compared with many an illiterate office-holding politician, no. Men ignorant of everything but how to wheedle your people out of their votes are in many instances paid as many thousands as your teachers are paid hundreds for doing nothing but draw their salaries and work for their party. Your cities would be better governed without the political sinecure, and the wasted money better expended on the faithful teachers who give the best years of their life for the teaching and upbuilding of your future citizens.

"I tell you, Ruben, it is all wrong—wrong now, and growing worse as the insatiable desire for government positions (city and national) grows upon the people. It creates a dissatisfaction with the hard drudgery that must be done to keep the wheels going. Men want something easier, and, looking about, catch sight of a 'position,' and bend all their efforts to reach some petty office, no matter what the office, so that they may not have to drudge. Many a good artisan is turned into a poor Alderman, who, in turn, helps make the laws for your great cities. This holds good not alone in the petty offices sought for the pay, but often in the highest positions in your country sought for the honor. Look, if you will, into the 'Millionaires' Club,' at the seat of your National Government. Who are the men who are filling the places vacated by your Websters, Clays, Calhouns, Jeffersons and like statesmen? True, it has even yet many great men; but compare the ability and simplicity of other days with the luxury-loving present. What an example is this great national almshouse for the millions who are struggling for a meagre existence! I say 'almshouse,' for does not your government dole out and pay for the 'cold tea,' bromo-seltzers, etc., as it would dole out and pay for your paupers?"

"But, Tom," said I, "would you have our great lawmakers placed upon a 'cheap' scale? You must remember that times have changed since the days of 'Jeffersonian simplicity.'"

"Oh, how true that is! Times have indeed changed. The man with millions now fills the place once held by the statesman, but the poor of your land are worse off than they were in the old days, and are made to feel it by seeing how luxurious your lawmakers are enabled to live, whilst they must struggle on with little for the present and a prospect for even less as the times continue to change.

"Seeing all this luxury, the desire for office is becoming so intense that a man will barter self-respect, honor, everything, to the leader who may be able, by means of vast, far-reaching political machinery, to elect him. Is that man's vote cast for the good of the people who sent him? Does his own judgment play any part in legislation? In a word, does he or the silent leader make your laws? The lobbyist will soon be relegated to some political museum. His calling is rapidly passing. The great corporation that wishes a law that will wring from the burdened public more money and turn it into its vast party treasury does not go, as formerly, into your halls of Assembly, wine, dine and buy your Assemblymen, but it goes quietly to some great leader, and there bargains for it as for a legitimate commodity."

"Do you mean, Tom, that these leaders accept money, as individuals?"

"No, not that exactly. They simply allow the corporation to donate thousands of dollars toward running the 'machine.' Many of them are personally very honest men. It is not the money but the power they can wield by being able to raise the necessary funds. Some men care far more for power than for gold or silver. To know that they can make or ruin the prospects of a candidate; to pass or kill a measure by a nod or shake of the head; to have their fellow-men bow to their slightest wish, is far sweeter to them than mines of wealth."

"This may be true," said I, "of elective offices; but does not the civil service protect the aspirant for an appointive position?"

"Ruben, the man whose per cent. on real ability might reach 100 stands no chance with one of 50 per cent. of ability and 49 per cent. of political influence."

"Tom," said I, "you are too severe on our system of government. You can see nothing that is right. Everything is wrong, and yet I had thought no government in the world had so fine a system as ours. You have condemned it in a general way, which is no proof of the wrong."

"Then let me speak of the wrongs not in a general way. Is it a correct system of government that in any form gives rights to one that it gives not to all? Is it a right system of government that admits of a possibility of a great merchant who perchance has contributed a vast amount of money to elect his favorite, receiving in turn for that contribution contracts at his own price, against all bids, no matter how low? Is it a right system of government where a favorite bank, which, like the merchant, had responded when called upon for campaign funds, is given preference over all others as a depository? Or, coming down to the individual, is it a right system of government where laws oppress one that another may be benefited? Is that law a just one that says one man shall work a full day at hard labor, putting in every minute of the time, at a low wage, while it gives to another high pay for one or two hours' sitting? And right here I will be specific: Property is to be condemned for water rights or a street is to be opened or widened, or some other matter of public needs is to be attended to. A commission is appointed on which more of your men with influence are placed. An hour's sitting means a day's work. Tens of thousands of dollars of the public's money are frittered away for what, if conducted as men of business would conduct their business, could be better adjusted in a short time and at a nominal cost. Begging your pardon for any seeming disrespect to your chosen profession, I am sorry to have to say that much of this costly commission work must be laid at your doors. You never rush commission work. You extend a case with even more tact than a poor doctor with a rich patient. Why, some of these commissions cost in fees almost as much as the price of the property condemned. Your lawyers, in their seeming effort to get the people's lands for less than their value, make these lands cost far above their value. The day will come when the people will find a far less expensive way of determining real values than by an expensive commission.

"Wipe out those laws from the statute which oppress the poor, for, Ruben, the Lord knows their lives are hard enough at best. The impression among those who know nothing about the poor, save as inferior beings to be looked down upon, is that they have no aspirations above the life they lead. Ruben, I have seen men among those ground down by poverty who have aspirations that make a hell of their surroundings. They would rise above them, but they cannot. The injustice of their fellow-men has so interwoven systems of oppression that they cannot surmount the barriers that shut them in. I do not speak of those who are numbed by ignorance and are happy in their condition. These are content, in a great measure, with their lot in life and are happy with little. I speak of those who would come out of their low condition, a condition reached too often through no fault of theirs, but through wrong systems.

"I once stood in a great railway station and watched the people come and go. Near me was a young husband and wife. From a few sentences I gathered that the wife was from some inland town, and was at the station to take a train for her old home.

" 'Jack,' she said, 'I hate to go. Each time I go back, I look worse. Both my clothing and my face show the struggle we have had against poverty. But, oh! Jack, dear, I do not blame you, for I know you have done the best you could!' They were silent as they turned to wipe something from their eyes. Oh that the rich, who know not nor feel not the struggles of the poor for their existence, could have seen that simple parting! Is the unneeded surplus of their wealth worth those silent tears? Do the wasted roses and rare flowers pay for the misery their cost might relieve?

"When the wife had gone I made excuse to talk with the husband. At first he was loath to speak other than in commonplace, but I finally drew from him some of his life's history, which was that of thousands of others. He had once held a lucrative position in a great manufacturing firm and was prosperous. He had been a traveling salesman, or what you in America call a drummer—I. O. O. G. F.—a body of men, by the way, who might well be called the Sunshine of Commercial Life, as they have carried throughout your land more of brightness than has any other class. But the sunshine is fast waning into twilight, and the places that have known him will ere long know him no more. And all because other of your people, less worthy, want that 'fraction of a per cent.'

"This man was cultured, but his spirits were broken by the long fight for existence. His clothing, of rich material when new, was now, from long wear, much worn, and showed the handiwork of a frugal wife in the patches she had tried so hard to disguise. Oh, the tears and heartaches oft indicated by a patch!

"The firm for which he had worked from office boy upward went into a trust, and he was no longer needed. He sought a position in the only line he knew, but was everywhere told that there was no place for him. No place for a man to earn his loaf of bread in this age, when others are piling up their millions!

"He finally got his name placed on the waiting list in a great street railway corporation, and when I met him he was working 'a few days each week,' as he said. He told me how that these great corporations broke in unneeded numbers of men, so that in case of a strike the places of the strikers could always be filled by others, who were driven by necessity to accept any terms offered. 'Jacks' are becoming very numerous.

"I would not have the rich give their wealth in charity. Charity, so-called, degrades the recipient and relieves but temporary needs. Give 'Jack' a chance to help himself. That is true charity and lasting."

"Yes, Tom, but how?" I asked. "In this age of close competition the manufacturers, the business men in general, have to watch every turn lest they themselves fail. I tell you it is an impossibility to give to the employee better than he is now getting."

"Ruben, the proofs of the possible are the facts that exist. I have in mind an establishment which has grown as though by magic. There is in this vast manufactory none of that feeling against the firm which prevails too often where the employee is counted only as a machine. The head of this great industry has a heart through which pulsates human feeling. He has erected a library and filled it with the choicest literature, making of his employees a reading, thinking people. He has surrounded his great buildings with a labarynth of trees and flowers. He has a hospital for those who may become ill, and the best of physicians to minister to them. In short, his people are his family. His rules are just and bear lightly. The products of his factory are the perfection of mechanism; for the workmen put into their work a loving judgment. They give in return for fair treatment the best they have —cultured skill.

"Again, not far from the city wherein is located the above works, in a little town in Southern Ohio, there is a great manufacturing firm whose employees share in its profits. A strike is never known. The workman feels that the great men in the office are his friends; he feels, too, that they are working for him, and in his turn he must work to their best interest who have made his life less of a burden. He becomes a better workman and a better man. While other firms in the same line have failed, this one has gone steadily on, until it is far in advance of all its competitors, until it has no competitors. What it has done others can do. The millionaire who gives to charity his thousands ground out of the lives of his workmen will get no reward here nor hereafter."

"Tom, what you say may be very true, but do you know what the world calls men who advocate such principles as you have been advocating to-night?"

"And, Ruben, do you know what the men of Ephesus called the Apostles? I tell you right is right, though it take a thousand years to prove it! The world may say what it may, but the world will not be its best until justice and right are equally meted out to all. No wonder the world is bad, when man superior deals so ill with man inferior. If the human instead of the pride in mankind were to predominate, how soon the world would grow better! The rich would be happier and the poor more content.

"There will come a time when your people will see and fully realize their condition, and with the coming of that time there will arise a leader who will champion the cause of justice and lead them out into the right. This leader will not come from the conservative East, but from the West, where the human still holds sway in the hearts of the people. This leader will be a young man of the progressive school. He will come from the masses. He will be owned by no man or class of men. His own sense of justice will dictate his every act. He will pay no incompetent man with a great office for political or financial reasons, but will choose men whose statesmanship is not measured by the dollar or the ability to assist him in gaining the leadership. When such a man shall arise, woe be to the trusts that are grinding out the lives of your people! Woe be to the men who would make the lot of the poor even worse than it now is. It has been said by a great man that 'trusts represent the distinction of opportunity.' This young leader will be a man who cannot be defeated by the millions of dollars poured out by the rich corporations who would destroy him, for your people will recognize him when he comes and follow him on to victory."

"Tom, why do you speak of the West as better than the East in human feeling?" I could not help asking, as he was so emphatic in his assertion.

"Ruben, have I ever found a fault without giving a reason? Can you call to mind where in the West that the very heads of a city government would be so devoid of all human feeling as to be, for selfish gain, parties to forcing up by a trust combination prices of an absolute necessity to a point almost beyond the reach of the very poor, many of whose votes had helped to place in power these same heads? No, Ruben, it could not be found in the West, nor would I have believed it possible to find it anywhere in the world, not even among the lowest order of beings, much less the highest."

CHAPTER LII.

It is not the wood, the brick and the stone that makes the home. It is the place and not the structure, the land and not the house.

While Tom was in the midst of his discourse on bad laws and their makers, the Broker and the Preacher came in and sat as interested listeners. Having a practical turn of mind, the broker turned the conversation into a channel relating to his line of business, the taxing of real estate, the ownership of properties, etc. He was surprised to hear Tom's notions, as was I, for we, knowing his Socialistic views, had thought he would advocate a different line of adjustment.

"What is your opinion on the question of 'unearned increment?' Would you have only the unimproved property pay the taxes and thus compel the owners of such to improve it? Since it is by the buildings of your neighbors that your vacant lot is made valuable, should you not pay for such enhancement?" asked the broker.

"There never was a greater fallacy," began Tom, who always seemed ready with an answer. "A village, town or city needs only about so many dwellings or business houses to accommodate its people. Every structure beyond its growing needs but comes into competition with those that can be used, and the further building of useless houses but depreciates the value of the whole. That man who will hold his vacant lot, pay taxes on this unearning property, year after year, rather than to build in competition with his neighbor should not be fined for doing it.

"Another very great fallacy is that the state should own the land and lease it to the people. This would soon blot out of the language that beautiful word 'Home.' It is not the wood, the brick and the stone that make the home. These may be burned, shaken down or blown away. It is the land on which the house is set that appeals to the heart. Have you not, when boys, fought the great bees that build their nests in the fields; fought and utterly destroyed their home? Have you not watched those that escaped your 'bee paddle;' how they hover around the place, and, if undisturbed, rebuild their nest in the same excavation? Your country would soon be a place of houses with 'home' eliminated did the state own the land. It is the place, and not the structure; the land, and not the house."

"Would you have the government own and manage the railroads, telegraph lines and such like interests as they are managed in some of the European countries?" asked the broker.

"By no means," Tom replied. "That would kill the independence of the individual. As well have all the various lines of trade run by the government. You would ere long become a land of clerks and operators—mere machines, to swing to and fro as the pendulum of a clock, to go exactly so far and back again; automatons, wound up and run by a spring, instead of a mind. There must always be an incentive to bring out the best in man. The right to patent invention has wrought wonders in all the lines of progress. The man who has a vested interest will always protect that interest far more than the mere employee. With no vested right of the individual the world would soon go backward.

"That to which the Socialist objects is the wrong use to which vested rights are put. The great struggle of the rich to gain what they do not need deprives the poor of what they must have to exist. When the poor demand their share, they are called Socialists; when they insist, they are called Anarchists. The very poor are degraded. Continued pinching poverty would turn a king into a vagabond. Poverty destroys honor and virtues, and yet we who would protect both are called approbious names if we raise our voice in protest and sent to prison if we but raise our hand."

The Preacher, interested only in the moral side of matters, asked among many other subjects: "Why is it that gambling cannot be stopped in our great cities?"

"The reason is a very short one," replied Tom; "and that reason is that those in power do not wish it stopped. It is a source of too great revenue to them."

"Oh, no, that cannot be true," objected the Preacher. "See how every year our good men in power try so hard to break up this terrible evil, even going so far as to destroy the gambling devices of those wicked men. No, you do them an injustice. They, I think, want to do their duty by the people whom they govern."

"Your argument but proves one of the reasons for this annual crusade against the evil. They have two purposes, these good men in power—one is to fool the innocent public, of which you seem to be a member; but the real reason, or purpose, is far deeper. Human nature is confined to no class, and the gambler has his portion. One of the first principles, deep rooted, is to never pay more for anything than it is worth; and it takes at least one good stirring up each year to make the gambling fraternity feel that they are not paying too high for protection for the rest of the year.

"Among the 'good' men in power this crusade is but a jest, as the following will illustrate: I was in one of your cities during the 'annual crusade,' and was invited by a friend to go with him to a great political club room. Games of various kinds were in progress—not games for mere amusement, but for money. I was attracted by the dignified appearance of a party of men seated around one of the tables. They were not so deeply interested in the game as not to take up the subject that just then was attracting some attention in the city. 'Yes,' said one, 'this gambling is a terrible evil, and must be stopped. (Give me two cards). It is ruining our young men (I raise you five), and filling our poorhouses with (two of a kind; can you beat it?) widows and orphans.' 'Why not say we all,' said another. 'Now, we can do it. You represent one of the municipal courts; I the Prosecuting Attorney's office, and you of the police. Yes, let's reform the city. (Here, you, play up!) That's what we're all in for!' And these men really represented the offices mentioned. Now, my dear man, what sort of a hope have you of doing anything with vice when you ministers preach one day of the seven while vice is protected the whole of the seven by men who draw double pay—one for putting down (?) evil, and the other for protecting evil, especially when the last pay is the higher? I have long ceased to worry over this subject of 'chance.' I find too much else to occupy my time."

I do not know whether it was Tom's enthusiasm or my own innate desire to help the deserving poor that caused me to make many excursions with him among the low dens of poverty; but this I know: that could those men whose wealth is yearly piled higher by the toil of the beings I saw, see and know the true condition of these people, they would surely be content with less and gladly give to them, not charity, but just compensation. I take no credit when I speak of the many dollars of Aunt Racheal's legacy that went to brighten the homes of Tom's poor, for I received my reward as I went. I know, could the dear old aunt look down and see the joy these dollars brought; the homes they brightened, the hunger they relieved, the cold they warmed, the lives of little children they saved, or the naked they clothed, that she would not feel she had erred in willing me a part of her barren old farm.

Helen seemed never so happy as when I would tell her of the poor little children I had seen. I always knew what she meant when she would begin, "Mister Ruben, tell me about them!" "Them" had only one meaning to her. Once she begged her mother so pleadingly to be allowed to go with me that her wish was granted. That visit among the homes of the very poor was as though to a new world to her. One sentence of her recital of that visit told the whole story. She had seen in a tenement a very much starved cat that went about coughing and sneezing: "Oh, mamma, you should see how those people live. They look so tired and sick. Why, mamma, at one place even the cat had consumption."

After that visit she would have her special cases to look after, through Tom, who I never knew to fail in selecting the deserving. He knew the impostors by intuition, and they, too, soon learned to know and shun him.

CHAPTER LIII.

MAGGIE'S STORY.

"My early life ran clear as the mountain stream nearby our cottage home."

One evening, on my return from law school, Tom met me with a more than usual serious face. He was always serious. I had scarce known him to smile and never once to laugh. He seemed ever to be bearing the burdens of those who know no joy. Life to him was always real. There were no flowers along the wayside for him—naught but weeds and tangled vines, and little graves in the Potter's Field.

"Ruben" said he, "I want you to go with me to-night. One of the saddest deaths occurred today that I have ever witnessed. It was that of a woman whose illness I had but heard of it this morning. She was dying when I reached the garret in which she lay. A little nest of straw and one thin, raged coverlet was her bed. A little girl of three years played about the room, all unconscious of her mother's conditin. She would now and then go to the bed and say: 'Mamma, I is so hungry. Dit up and do out an' dit me a tust.'

" 'Yes, darling, mamma will go soon,' and turned her head and sighed, 'Poor dear! I will go soon!'

"The first thing I did was to send for a physician and some nourishing food for mother and child; but I could see that neither would be of any use to the mother. Almost before the doctor came she was gone, but before she died she took from her bosom an envelope and feebly gave it to me.

" 'My life's story. Please, kind sir, find a home for my darling—my poor little Maggie.'

"That was all. I called in some of the women of the tenement to look after the unfortunate, and left the child with a good woman I knew.

"Here is the envelope. I did not have the heart to open it."

I took it from him, tore it open, and began to read. I looked for the name, when, lo!—I exclaimed: "Tom, what strange fate led you to that garret? This woman is the long lost Maggie—the widow's daughter of whom I have told you. Go quickly, and at once. See that no lady could be looked after more gently. Get for her the best. Give me the address, and I will follow when I have read the story. It may contain that which I should know at once."

I read it through. It was short, but contained a great volume.

MAGGIE'S STORY.

"My story, like my life, is very short. When all is over, when I can no longer see that mother whose life I have saddened, send me back to her. She may remember the good and forgive the bad she thinks of me.

"I once was pure and good and knew no wrong.

"I was born and reared in Highmont, Penn. My early life ran clear as the mountain stream nearby our cottage home, where my mother and I dwelt alone in content.

"When a child of seventeen, when I knew nothing of the wrongs of the world, there came into my life a tempter, who told me of the beauties to be seen in other lands. Oh, the pictures he drew of that world about which I knew nothing! To me he proposed marriage, and though I knew naught of him, I loved, aye, worshiped him, and accepted his offer. I would have told my mother at once, but he forbade it. 'No,' said he, 'we will go away and be married. She might object, and, my darling, I dare not risk losing you.' I believed him, and late in the night we came away, walking a long distance. For him I could have walked to the end of the world. We reached at last a railway station, and came to a city—where I do not know. There we were driven a long distance to a house, where we were married, as I then thought. The man gave us a paper, which my husband kept. From this city we came to New York. The first thing I did was to write a long letter to my mother, asking her to forgive me and telling her how happy I was.

"I soon learned that my husband was very wealthy. He bought for me the finest of gowns and jewels. He said I was very beautiful, and that he was proud of me. All these things were as nothing to his love of me.

"We traveled in Europe, visiting all the great cities, seeing the things of which he had told me. The sights we saw soon began to lose their charm, for I could see that my husband's love was growing cold. We returned to New York, which we had scarcely reached when my husband said: 'Maggie, I think we have kept up this farce long enough!'

" 'What do you mean by farce?'

" 'Why,' said he, with a sneer that cut like a knife into my heart, 'the farce of being married. We are not married!'

" 'Not married? That cannot be true—we were, and you have the paper.'

" 'Come, come, little one, don't grow hysterical. Even if we were married, you have no proof of it. Why, you don't even know the city where that sham ceremony was pronounced.'

" 'Oh, what will my mother say, after all my letters to her, telling of our marriage and my great happiness!'

" 'Don't worry, little one. She knows nothing. Your letters were never sent.'

"This was too great a blow. The perfidy of the man I had worshiped as a god! I swooned away, and when my senses returned I was alone.

"Why tell of my long years of struggle! My life is but the counterpart of hundreds of other wronged women who have had to suffer on in silence. My little one came, and, not daring to use another's name, I gave her my own.

"As long as I could pledge my jewels and fine clothing we lived. Since then we have existed.

"A woman with a child has no place. No doors were open to us. We were outcasts.

"From a rented room to a tenement, and then the end—a garret!

"Not long ago, when I was almost in rags, I was standing one evening watching the richly dressed people entering one of the great theatres, when a carriage drove up to the sidewalk. A gentleman and a beautiful young woman alighted and were about to enter the theatre, when I recognized in the man my husband. I started toward him, pleading him to hear me. 'Officer!' said he to a ready policeman, who stood near the entrance, 'take this woman away,' at the same time thrusting money into the officer's hand. I was thrown into prison, and when, next morning, I was brought before the judge, the story told by the policeman outweighed my prayers, and I was sent away to the island for three months, during which time the kind neighbors, who are nearly as poor as myself, looked after my little Maggie.

"The very name my husband gave was as false as himself; and yet I would have known and recognized the face of the 'Hunter,' as he was known at Highmont, had I seen it in the furthest part of the world.

"This is the end of my story, and soon, I feel, will come the end of my young life, while he who has caused all this sorrow and pain will live on, honored by the world—for he has gold. I, too, might live on were I false to my vows; but I will die here in my garret alone with my child rather than be unfaithful to him. Though he be false in everything, yet do I love him.

"Should my dear old mother be living, I pray she may forgive her wronged MAGGIE."

Then followed a postscript, in which she gave her mother's name; also the name by which she had known her husband.

CHAPTER LIV.

"The people of a small village are quick to blame and quite as ready to condone a wrong step."

"I is so happy. My dood dramma says I won't never have to eat tusts no more."

As the reader knows, the mother was well known to me, and by another strange fate I had recently seen the "Hunter" a number of times enter a most palatial residence not far from my boarding place.

I am quick to act. So, hailing a passing cab, I was soon being driven toward the "Hunter's" home.

My mind was a chaos of thought. What could I do? I had no proof, although certain that he was the man. He could deny all knowledge of the dead woman. No one had seen him leave Highmont with her, and no one that I could have found knew of the marriage. Even the city where it had been performed was unknown. I had absolutely no witness. No witness? Yes, I had one—his own heart; and I would make that one lone witness prove his guilt. How could I excuse my call on him?—I, a stranger, with no right to enter his home and brand him as a villain! And yet I would see him, and at once!

I was at his door. I bid the cabman wait for me. I sent in my card, giving the false name as the one I wished to see. The negro grinned out: "I guess, mistah, you dun made a mistake. De man yah wants doan lib heah."

"Give the card to the young gentleman who does, and say I wish to see Mr. Charles Coulders."

This was a bold stroke on my part, but nothing less seemed to me at the time a better way of placing my one lone witness in the chair. I knew that the "Hunter" would not send word that a mistake had been made. The witness would not allow such word to be sent.

Ah, he quickly responds; almost before I had taken a seat he was in the reception room, to which I had been shown.

He faltered as he spoke. "I fear you have made a mistake, Mr. Hick—Mr.—— (looks at the card) Hickenlooper."

"Then why," said I, "did you not send word by your servant if I have made a mistake?" He saw the point *I* raised and colored deeply.

"Well, Mr. Coulders does not live here," said he.

"How long since he did?" I asked.

"He never lived here!" with rising emphasis.

"Possibly not as 'Mr. Coulders.'" said I searchingly.

"What do you mean, sir?" coming toward me.

"My words bear their own meaning, and need no translation."

"Come to the point, sir, and play not with words."

"Then, *Mr. Coulders, your wife died this afternoon in utter poverty,* whilst you are living in all this luxury. That is what I mean!"

Ah, that was the dart that pierced my one witness. It made the "Hunter" tremble and grasp at a chair for support. I would have followed it up, but he asked:

"Your proof, sir!"

"That is the very demand a guilty man would make. Guilty, you know, but as a last hope you ask the proof—you know, but would ask a proof of it. Mr. Coulders, I come to you direct, asking reparation for the awful wrong you have done an innocent girl. Will you make that reparation or will you compel me to take the course that will right this great wrong?"

"Who are you, sir, who thus enter my house and make such accusation?"

"I am the defender of the woman who lies dead to-night in a lonely garret, whilst her husband, who should have protected her, denies that he knew her."

"Again I ask: Where's your proof? Suppose that what you say be true, you cannot prove it. You have no record. You cannot even name the city where the ceremony was pronounced."

Ah, that was true. I had no evidence, but I would continue my bold effort, even up to the verge of what I would detest, did I not know he was guilty.

"Mr. Coulders, what you say may be true. I may not have the proof that would convict you before a jury of twelve, but I have this, which, when that far greater jury —the world—sees, you will tremble at its verdict. I have, sir, your wife's dying statement, and she names you as her husband, with evidence, strong enough, in my mind, to warrant this bold accusation on my part. You refuse to right the wrong? I will not produce the proof. I will let the last words of your wronged wife do that. Then you will be asked by an exacting jury to refute her words. Mr. Coulders, I will bid you good evening."

"Stay! Do not go away with that threat. I am innocent in the law, and you cannot prove me other than innocent; but I do not wish my name to be kicked about by the common herd! What do you demand for your great interest in this person?"

"For myself I demand nothing, but for your child——"

"What!" he exclaimed; "a child—my child?"

"Yes; a pretty little girl of three years. For her I demand that you shall place in trust a sum that will in a measure make up for the wrongs you have done her dead mother—your wife!"

"Call upon me at 10 o'clock in the morning, and you shall have my answer. One more question, sir: Who are you, and who is your reference that I may know with whom I am dealing?"

"You have my card, and my reference is Mr. Edward S. DeHertbern.

"What! the firm of DeHertbern & Son?" he asked, in great surprise.

"The same," said I.

"Well, I trust our conversation to-night will not be repeated to them."

"I do not repeat conversations," said I quietly.

"Good-night, Mr. (another glance at the card) Hickenlooper. I will expect you at 10 to-morrow," and he extended his hand, but I did not see it—at least did not take it—as I left the house.

I was driven to the address Tom gave me. The contrast was well expressed by the cabman when he said, as I got out of the cab, "From pallis to the huvel!"

That voice! Where had I heard it before?

"Is this Pat, who once drove a young country boy from the ferry up to and then the whole length of Fifth avenue, *looking* for Fifth avenue?"

"I'm wan ov thim!"

Just then it dawned upon him who I was. "Oh, is this the buy with the bag ov ginger bread and the quare shuit ov close, an' the big hat, an' the long hair? Is it you! Wull, wull, wull! It is frum huvel to pallis dhis toime! Me conshunse has often choided me fur dhat thrick ——"

"Well," said I, reassuringly, "I am sorry your *conscience* has served you so badly; but the memory of that drive well repays the cost, and I forgive you."

I found that Tom had already carried out my instructions. I saw the mother and her little Maggie. There was scarce a feature in that poor, dead face that called to my mind the beautiful girl I had known in the little village; but in the child I could see the promise of even greater beauty.

I remained until everything was arranged for the morrow.

Promptly at 10 o'clock I was in Mr. "Coulder's" office. He was waiting for me, and would have greeted me even cordially had I shown any response.

"I have," he began, "thought the matter over, and have made out this check for you, which I will give only on condition that my name shall never appear in this unpleasant affair." I took it, and, though I knew him to be well to do, I was greatly surprised to see the large amount for which it was made out.

"I grant the condition," said I, "not for the money, but because I have not the proof of your villainy." He winced as I continued: "Could I prove that, I should gladly pay this amount myself for your child. This money shall be placed at interest and used most conscientiously for her. You will one day be proud to own her as a daughter."

I have seen my prophesy verified after many years.

That afternoon I went back to Highmont with the dead and the living, having sent a message to Sister Anna to prepare the poor widow for my coming.

The people of a small village are quick to blame and quite as ready to condone a wrong step. The widow had the deep sympathy of all when they had heard the story, and little Maggie was soon the pet of Highmont.

The day I left, the child, too young to feel her loss, said to me: "I is so happy; my dood dramma says I won't never, never have to eat tusts no more."

CHAPTER LV.

THE CELEBRATION MAN.

"That man would defraud an employee on a technicality."

He dressed well and lived well; yet no one at the boarding-house knew his occupation. In fact, he seemed to have no occupation.

A man in New York with nothing to do is always a mystery to those around him. This man to us was a mystery. He came and went as regular as a clock. He was genial, and appeared well informed on all the topics of the day.

The city was about to celebrate a great event in its history. He was particularly well informed on the subject and manifested great interest in it.

When we saw one morning in the newspapers that he had been "entrusted with the full management of the celebration" we were surprised. We felt honored, in that one of our people had been chosen to fill a position so prominent.

"Why should he have been the choice of the city, when there were so many who were better known to select from?" we asked.

Was he the choice? Events proved that he, and he alone, had guided the choosing. He was a professional "celebrator," a calling so entirely new to me that I followed with such interest its inside workings that I feel quite competent to devote this chapter on "How to Make Celebrating Pay."

As a prerequisite you must have a military title, even though you may have to sojourn a month in that State renowned for its colonels and "Majahs." Having acquired this title, see that you are never addressed without it. If a man addresses you as "mister," tell him plainly to "never let it occur again."

To the watchful professional, something to celebrate will soon present itself. If not, make something. This is your opportunity. Embrace it. You may wish to take the credit of first thinking of it, but don't do it. You'll have time enough to boast of that when you should be doing something else. Given the opportunity, bestir yourself to find the most prominent man in the city to act as chairman. This will give it respectability. Whatever you do, however, avoid the selection of a man who shows any inclination to "run things." Get yourself appointed as manager at an exorbitant salary, and your success is assured. Waste no time in putting upon the general committee every rich or prominent man in the city, but choose no one for your sub-committees whom you cannot fully control, for there will be contracts to be given out, and therein lies your real opportunity. Bids will come in for all sorts of things—from barrels of "buttons" to the stands upon which the public will see the parades. Programmes and tons of other printing will be required, and more tons of fireworks to illuminate the city and harbor must be purchased. Never take the lowest bid. Choose, rather, the highest, as this tends to put the bidder making it into a very generous state of mind. But do not trust this state of mind; it may change when once the contract is signed. Trust to nothing but a definite agreement as to your part of the profit for the guidance of the contract.

You will soon find yourself so occupied in looking after these contracts that assistants must be appointed to run the real business of the celebration. Never choose these assistants from any of the committees. Choose them from among your own men (a professional celebrator always has a goodly following), and see that they are paid far beyond their value. They will appreciate this and use their best efforts to make the innocent public believe you are It.

You must, to be sure, have headquarters. Men of public spirit will come forward with offers of their hotels; exchanges may throw open their committee-rooms to you with freedom and a welcome, but be firm and say "no" to all such offers. Select rather some expensive hotel whose management will pay you well for such selection. Use as many rooms as possible, especially if the rental be extravagant. This is conducive to liberality on the part of the aforesaid management.

A most indispensable adjunct to a Celebration is the press department, and one of the first men to appoint is a live press agent, who will work up public interest to the subscribing point against the day for paying the bills.

The success or failure of the Celebration, from a public standpoint, has nothing to do with the case. Your sole object will have been accomplished when the contract bills have been paid, and you will never after be looked upon by your fellow boarders as a mystery.

There will be no dearth of amusing incidents in the organizing of a Celebration, especially in the selecting of the committees, in watching the various means men of small calibre will use to get this cheap honor. I have in mind a rich man from some small town up in the State whose parents, to make sure to him a title, had given him at birth a high-sounding naval one. He spent his winters in the city, and when the committees were being chosen he claimed New York as his residence, and was most anxious for the honor of being a committeeman, but later on when asked to help defray the expenses of the Celebration he would not give a dollar toward it, and thought it "very strange that the city could not run its own affairs without begging help from up-State citizens."

When Tom heard of this up-State committeeman he said: "That man would defraud an employee on a technicality."

The Celebration man is but one of the many in a great city who play upon the enthusiasm of the public for their livelihood.

The public is very old, and yet in many ways it is quite new. Like the individual, it must first lose that it may learn that it is being played upon.

CHAPTER LVI.

Did the public know the vast amounts of money paid to their servants (?) to influence legislation, they would not have so great a feeling of patriotism on election day.

So much of self has been interwoven into my story, or series of stories, that I will not ask of you to follow me through my years of school life, and into my well-appointed offices. Thanks to Aunt Racheal, I did not have to begin "practice" with a small office, a scanty purse and a large appetite, as do most of the young professional men we read about. Neither did I have to wait the regulation months for my "first client." This client was kindly waiting for me, in the person of Mr. DeHertbern, much of whose legal business, not requiring years of wisdom, I could do for him.

It is said that all young men have a longing desire for public office, and given the opportunity, they will not refuse the honor. Be that as it may, when Tom came to me one day and told me that there was a determined movement started to send me to the Assembly, and that my many friends on the East Side were most anxious to give me their votes, I did not hesitate long in telling him that I was "in the hands of my friends." Election day proved that these friends were many, as my majority was most gratifying.

One term was quite enough to cure me of the aforesaid "longing desire." It will ever be a pleasure to say no to all future honors of like character.

That one term was an experience I shall never forget. The influences and temptations thrown about a young Assemblyman no one knows. The staid Deacon who "passes the plate" in his village church at home may be found at midnight in the saloon, or places even lower. "One of the boys" fits him well.

I used often to wonder why bribery could not be proven. I do not wonder any more. I have known men who, when they entered public office, were almost miserably poor, but in a few years were not only well to do, but rich. The innocent public wonder at the change, but continue to send back year after year these men whose wealth is a mystery to them.

I spoke of bribery being almost impossible to prove. There *is* no bribery, or at least there need be none. Why? The reason is plain. A vote is needed on a bill; the lobbyist (Tom was wrong—the lobbyist is still an "institution" much in evidence) gets up "a quiet little game" and kindly *loses* enough money to pay for the vote. No, there *is* no bribery! The lobbyist paid out no money for a single vote. He was simply a poor card-player, that was all—but his bill went through and the voter went home at the end of the term and "fixed up the old house," or, if he had played enough games, built a new one and bought a team.

Did the public know the vast amounts of money paid to their servants (?) to influence legislation, they would not have so great a feeling of patriotism on election day. The year I served there were many important questions brought forward. I shall never forget the interest a certain "servant" had in the passage of a bill that would affect the men who live by "chance." By chance I learned that for his "interest" he was well remunerated. He was paid *one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars* for his influence. After the money had passed into his hands he lost all interest in the bill, which, like his interest, was also lost. "His name?" Oh, no; I will reserve that for a later edition. This being no fiction, he *has* a name.

Every session has its "strikers." The "striker" is a unique character. A man with no moral sense of right or wrong, whose thought begins and ends with self. He seeks the office for a purpose; that purpose has nothing to do with the public good. He is a man of no ability, save that for advancing himself. Before election he talks loudly of the wrongs done to the people by the "giant corporations," and when elected, having little or no ability, he gets some one to draft him a bill antagonistic to one of the aforesaid "giants," and makes great pretence of having his bill passed, knowing full well that he will soon have an invitation to one of those "quiet little games," when he subsides and drops back into his natural mediocrity and is heard of no more that term. The "striker" is unique. Nor is he the only character found among our law-makers who looks alone at self gain. The statesman is becoming alarmingly rare who seeks alone the public good.

I am now quite convinced, with Tom, that we have too much making of laws and too little enforcement of those we already have. As Tom says, the man with money or influence need fear no law, and since most of them are made for his benefit, the poor alone are made to feel their oppression.

While in the Assembly I could note, as never before, 'the power of the press." The "home paper" is feared far more than are the home people. "What the paper says," or "what the editor thinks" in his private letters to his "member," carries far more influence than if each one of his constituents should write that member a personal letter.

These "papers" are seldom entirely honest in their endeavor. During my one term, there was a universal demand from all parts of the State for economy. "The people are being taxed beyond reason," was the cry. Bald-headed Broker, my real-estate friend, had called my attention to the burdensome charges for legal printing of delinquent taxes. Looking into the matter carefully, and taking up the general subject of legal printing, I drew up a bill cutting these charges down to reasonable advertising rates, and submitted it. Had I deliberately set fire to the State House I could not have been half so roundly abused as I was by these same criers for economy. I never would have believed a man could be so many different things all at the same time as they called me. The worst "cuts" of all, however, were those of wood, which they used in their cartoons of my innocent face.

Extra carriers had to be put on to bring the mail for the members from the editors of every country "cross-road sheet." It reminded me of the time I had advertised for "a quiet boarding-place." Members flocked around me in the corridors, followed me into the street, called at my hotel at all hours of the night and day, and begged me not to press my bill. "Let it die in the committee-room; we'll pay all funeral expenses, and tip the undertaker!" Men who had entirely ignored me were now most fawning in their attentions. When flattery, cajolery and such like means failed, threats were used.

"Why," said I, "these papers have been begging us for economy—to lighten the burdens of the people, and all that! My bill will certainly lighten it for some of them. Do you know that should a man owning fifty town lots in one body fail to pay his taxes at the right time, and they are advertised for sale, that, by law, some insignificant country paper may charge for each separate lot instead of as a whole, and that while the tax may be only a few cents each, that the advertising as now allowed will amount to nearly two dollars each? Do you know that the rate for legal advertising is sometimes seven-fold what these same papers would gladly accept for ordinary advertising? Do you know these things, and yet ask me not to press my bill? What have you come here to do, as representatives of the people whose votes sent you, as honest men, to work in their interest? Is this working in their interest to beg of me to withdraw my bill that would save them hard-earned money? Is it working in their interest that when they are forced by law into the legal column of a newspaper that they must needs pay seven times as much as they would have to pay were they advertising their goods or produce for sale?" And many more things did I ask the members who had gathered round in my hotel to beg of me to allow my bill to die a natural death.

Many of them shamedly crept away until but few of them remained, and these the more persistent.

"Do you know," asked one, who voiced the sentiments of his fellows—"do you know," he repeated, with great earnestness, "that if it were not for the legal printing that many of the newspapers could not exist?"

"No," said I quietly, "and I thank you for the information, for now I shall surely press the bill with greater energy in the double interest of the people."

"We know what you say is true," continued the spokesman; "but if you press your measure it will accomplish no good and do us great harm in any event. We dare not vote for it, as thus we antagonize the 'papers,' and if we do not vote for it we antagonize our constituents. You are a lawyer, are you not?"

"I am so called," said I.

"Then what need you care what legal printing costs? You don't have to pay the bill."

"I am a lawyer, 'tis true, but I would be a patriot first."

"Indeed!" with a sneer. "Well, young man, you are greatly out of place up here, then, and we don't think you will return. Eh, boys?"

"I sincerely trust I shall not; but while I am here I shall do my duty as I see it, and my bill will be pressed if it get but my own vote;" and when I did press it to a vote, mine was the only one it received.

No pariah was ever more alone than I during the remaining weeks of the session. Even the pages would have turned me down.

I am fortunately devoid of all sensitiveness when in the line of duty, and this ostracism by my fellow-members was rather a pleasant sensation to me.

Doubtless the people for whom I had aimed to do a service think of me, if at all, as anything but an honest man—their opinion having been formed for them by the "papers," which go right on charging them "legal rates."

I would not refuse to accord justice, however, where it is merited, and will say that on most public matters these same papers work valiantly for the general good.

CHAPTER LVII.

They may be accounted as great, but greatness alone has never yet taken the place of contentment.

Bill and Beatrice have long since been married, and, like Edward and Anita, are living in their own mansion.

Helen is no longer the prattling child, but the young woman just entering society. She is even more beautiful than was her promise to be.

Her childhood wish to see Highmont has often been gratified, for with Anita and Beatrice she has spent many a summer among the scenes I once loved so dearly, and revisit with such delight.

She is not only beautiful in face and form, but her character is one of those that brighten the world about her. While she has society as a worshiper, she never forgets those who know little of joy. Her father calls her the family philanthropist, and allows her unlimited means to gratify her desire for doing good, yet so quietly are her deeds done that few aside from the recipients know of them. Those few, however, are never idle. They ply her with begging letters for all possible and impossible purposes. They are most persistent in their requests, which many times amount to demands. Investigation, in some instances, proved that the writers really live off the charitable, who are touched by the seeming merit of the cases. These letter beggars, by long experience, are such adepts they could almost extract gold from the rocks.

With her multiplicity of social duties and her charitable work, her time was so taken up that I seldom saw her.

I don't know why, but I soon found myself wishing that she was a child again, that I might be "Mister Ruben" as of old. She never called me "Mister Ruben" any more. I felt myself drifting away from her, and when I occasionally saw her in society she was so surrounded by the younger men that I felt a return of that old feeling of being forgotten by the children who had once loved me. I fain would withdraw from society, but before the evening was over she would always come to me for a little while to say some pleasantries.

"Ruben," she would say, "it is so restful to talk with you. One does not have to be so precise." No, nor would one have to be to an inferior.

Was it a compliment she was paying me, or did she think of me as a person for whom she had no desire or care to please? I would leave the house long before the end of the reception, and quite resolve that I would accept no more invitations, but a something—I know not what—would ever cause me to break that resolution.

If I were conversing with a lady with any degree of interest, Helen would thereafter show in her manner more than in what she would say that she was not pleased with that particular lady. I could but silently note this in her, and wonder at it, for she seemed so free from dislike for any one.

Why should she care to whom I was agreeable? I was now but little to her, and with her widening circle of friends, was fast growing less.

She had been in society a year when a cousin of Anita came to visit America. He was very callow, this cousin, but, to compensate for manly bearing, he was an earl, which in the minds of too many condoned all else. The pigmy with a title too often outweighs every manly quality in the native American. He may lack every gift that marks the true man, and yet be held in greater esteem than the American with them all. This title worship has been the cause of many a wasted life, and yet new "moths" are ever being dazzled by the light and led away, wearing a coronet on the head while the joy they had hoped for never reaches the heart. They may be accounted as great, but greatness alone has never yet taken the place of contentment.

It was not long until it could be seen that the earl had made his choice, and that choice was Helen. Why should this have been aught to me? I must have known that she would some time marry and drop out of my life, and forget her "Mister Ruben" of childhood; but yet I felt it deeply when this time seemed to have come. I withdrew entirely from everything social.

I had been successful even beyond my hopes. The world had called me a great lawyer, a great financier; but this did not bring me any happiness. I found no joy in a single personal success, save when some other had been benefited. I had wealth, but I saw many a poor man who seemed so much more content that I envied him.

I sought to break this feeling in travel, and spent a year abroad, seeing all the places of interest in the old world; but returned with a heavier heart than when I started. I visited my old home, but the places I had once loved seemed to have lost all charm for me. I came back to the city and sought in my work the relief I had failed to find in recreation, but in vain.

Was this the reward of success? Was this my compensation for years of struggle to reach that pinnacle on which I had hoped to find true happiness? I would seek out the friends of long ago and live over with them the days when life was so free from care. But where were these friends? I sought for them, but found no friends. I saw many of those I had known when I first came to the city, and more whom I had met during my years at law school, but none of them seemed to me as I had known them. They were all changed. When we had exhausted the merest commonplaces our conversation was at an end. There was a barrier through which we could not penetrate. I asked one of them who had, in the old days, been a very dear friend, "Why are you so changed from the merry-hearted Jack I knew long ago?"

"It is you who are changed," said Jack, "not I. Good fortune has led you away into smooth paths. The world has accorded you a place in the first ranks; it does you homage for great success! You forget the early struggles in your years of continued prosperity, and now when you see the old friends who have been living on in the same dull routine, you ask, 'Why have you changed?' "

"And yet," I asked, "why should those whom once I loved drift away from me, and never seek me out? Do they no longer regard me? Have I done aught that would estrange me from them? Can they forget the ties that once bound us in friendship?"

"Ruben, this is a strange world. The higher one goes up, in the temple of fame, the further one gets away from his less successful friend. The friend may regard him, and watch his ascent with no envy, but with pride; yet he feels that to presume on the old friendship is to intrude, and he quietly drifts away, and when in after years they by some chance meet, each thinks the other has changed. They part, and possibly see each other no more."

Was this true? Must I feel that those whom my heart had called friends had dropped out of my life, and that I must hereafter wander on alone, with none save those who are bound to me in a business or professional way? I cried out at the curse of success! Would that I might go back to the old days—to the old joys! The people we meet beyond the bounds of youth are seldom friends of the heart. They may admire our ability, some quality of manner or intellect, but there is little of affection. We meet, admire, but seldom love these friends of later life. They may excel the old friends in all things good or great, but they can never be bound to us by those sweet, heart tendrils which twined us to the friends of long ago.

Here was I, scarce thirty years old, and yet I seemed standing alone. I had outrun in life's race my boyhood mates whom I would yet love, but my success had taken me out of their world. On the other hand, this success had surrounded me with people who paid homage to the position I held, and who would have done the same homage to that position held by another and forgotten me had reverses lost it to me.

I had not even the pleasure of a material want. My means were so great that all needs were supplied ere it had become a pleasure to want for them. Oh, the void in my heart, which the mines of earth could not fill!

I analyzed my life, but all to no purpose. I knew my condition, but this did not lighten the load.

It was long before I would admit to myself the real cause. I could not believe my heart would serve me so ill—to love that which could never be mine. "Never be mine!" rang back the mental echo. "Be mine!" it reverberated. "Mine!" it ended. Oh, that this end might be true! And yet I dared not allow myself to hope it, even had I dared to hope so rich a consummation.

I lived in the past. Often I found myself repeating the words of little Helen; but never could I make them seem the words of Helen the grown lady. "I will be your Helen forever and ever, and never forget you. I will love you always." How sweet these sentences, though spoken years ago by a child!

The earl was now a constant visitor at the home of Mr. DeHertbern. Society connected his name with Helen seemingly as a matter of course. In the early summer he returned to England, as all said, to arrange for the coming event, which "event" was to take from out my world the only one I had ever truly loved!

CHAPTER LVIII.

Is the stream less strong or its waters less pure for the rocks over which it has been dashed in its course? Some of its life may have been beaten into mist, but see all along the way the ferns and flowers which have been given life by that mist.

Shortly after the earl's departure Beatrice, Anita and Helen, with the children, went on their yearly visit to Highmont, which had been brought much nearer to the outside world by a railroad which I had built—more in sentiment for the old home than for an investment.

The week following, Bill came into my office one day holding a letter he had just received from Beatrice.

"Listen to this," he began: " 'We will be looking for you out two days after the receipt of this letter.' "

"Well," said I, "of course you will not disappoint them."

"You mean *we* will not disappoint them," quietly replied Bill.

"Why," I asked, "is Edward going with you?"

"No, you dull boy. I mean that you and I are going. We are both 'looked for.' "

"Bill," I protested, "I am sorry to disappoint you, but it will be impossible for me to go at this time."

"Oh, it is not me you will disappoint, you stupid fellow. Look at this postscript. Do you recognize the writer?"

In a dainty hand were these words: "Oh, Mister

Ruben, be your old self again, and come home." There was no name—no name was needed. I knew the hand that had penned that request, and quietly said: "Bill, I will go."

"Be your old self again!" Had she, too, noted the change? How could she, when she had seen me so seldom since her entrance into society? Before that time we were very much together, always as man and child; but since the world of society had claimed her, I had quietly dropped away and remembered her only as the child Helen. And for the first time in years, I was again "Mister Ruben." What a volume of sweet memories those two words brought back to me! I looked about and wondered why the world seemed so much brighter. The load on my heart which had ever grown heavier as the months went by, seemed all at once to grow lighter, and everything about me changed as though by a touch of magic. This happy feeling was too much of joy to last. Doubts and questions began flooding my mind until I almost regretted that I had promised to go with him. "Why does she want you to come home? She has been there a week, and already she is tired of the monotony, and would even have so stupid a fellow as you to amuse her! Yes, Ruben—'Mister Ruben'—go home and while away the time until the earl's return, and then you will be of no more interest to her. Go home!"

Soon I was even more despondent than before. The apples of joy seemed to turn to bitter fruit, as the doubts and questions filled my brain. Would I break my promise to Bill and again refuse to go? No, I will keep my promise, though my heart be broken by the going. I will know my fate, though that fate be my undoing!

I shall ever carry with me the picture I saw at the station at Highmont that bright June morning, as Bill and I looked from the car-door. The long, winding street, set against the mountains in the distance; this street bordered by houses that ever grew smaller on each of my returns from the city, while in the immediate foreground were my old father and mother, with Pauline and Evelyn May, now grown to womanhood, surrounded by Anita, Beatrice and Helen, all with bright, smiling faces turned toward us with such a warm welcome, was a picture that could hang forever in the choicest nook of the heart's gallery.

I tried to greet all alike, but somehow the greetings were more or less hurried until I had reached Helen, who had arranged to be the last, when we wandered off together, I almost forgetting that she had not come alone, while she seemed in her happy spirits to forget for the moment that a certain earl has ever existed.

Oh, the joys of those days at Highmont! Little excursions were taken to every point of interest for miles around. The evenings were filled in with innumerable entertainments, in which I always aimed to have the village friends participate. I brought companies of actors from the city and gave these good people what they had never before seen—real plays. And yet many of them said that "Robbins' Exhibition" far surpassed them all, showing, after all, that excellence is only the point of view from which it is taken.

Neither Helen nor I had once spoken the earl's name, or even made mention of him—she, no doubt, from a delicacy, and I lest my joys would come to an end by confession from her.

Two weeks had passed so swiftly along, freighted with their hourly pleasures, that I had scarce noted the time, when there came a day that stands out and beyond all the other days of my life till then.

The occasion was a drive of some ten miles to the Cascades, the one really romantic spot of all our countryside.

A little rivulet starting on the very mountain top was fed by innumerable springs along the course as it turned down a deep gorge in the cliffs, until it was soon a dashing, furious torrent as it rushed on to the quiet valley below. All along its tortuous course was cascade after cascade, and no two alike. Some sheer leaps of a hundred feet to the rocks below, others of lesser fall, but all full of wondrous beauty. Here and there were deep pools hollowed out by the endless ages through which the stream had flowed, and in these pools sported the beautiful mountain trout.

Never before had the Cascades seemed so full of grandeur as on that day. The rhythm of the falling water seemed to be in perfect harmony with the music in my heart. There was music in my heart, and yet I dared not analyze it. I was happy because Helen was near me. She might not be for long, but her presence numbed the future and for the time I was content.

After the picnic dinner, spread on a smooth plateau half-way up the mountain side, we wandered off from the rest of the party, Helen and I, "to gather ferns and wild flowers," but soon forgot our mission as we seated ourselves in the shade of a great overhanging oak in one of the few quiet spots along the water course.

"How like one's life," said I, "is this stream! It begins small and uneventful, runs along on a high plane, gathers strength as it goes, but ere long it begins to ruffle and break into little riffles, swirls over obstructions, falls away and dashes itself on the rocks below, only to gather itself together for more precipitous plunges further on!"

The occasion was a drive of some ten miles, to the Cascades, the one romantic spot of all our country side.—*Page 334.*

I shall never forget the sweet, quiet reply Helen made to my impassioned simile. "Ruben, look away down there below. See this same stream—here so rough and boisterous, there so smooth and placid—as it flows away toward the great ocean. Is the stream less strong or the waters less pure for the rocks over which it has been dashed in its course? Some of its life may have been beaten into mist, but see all along the way the ferns and flowers which have been given life by that mist. That life loses naught which contributes to other life."

"Yes; but, Helen," I replied, "some streams and some lines dash on to the end. There is no rest, no quiet eddies, no smooth ending."

"That may be true, Ruben; but many a life is wasted over rough and tortuous ways, where a smooth course might have been more easily taken and all the rocks avoided, and the end reached in peace."

Could she know what she was saying? Would I not have gladly escaped the precipitous rocks over which I had been carried during the years since she was my own little Helen? Could I choose my way when another held the course I would take? No, mine was a life not fitted to the one of peace of which she so sweetly spoke. Looking up at me, she said almost abruptly and quite innocently: "Ruben, I have watched your course for a long while, and have felt that your life was saddened, for some cause, and now in your simile of the stream I see it clearly; but why should your life be sad—you, who have met with success rarely attained by one of your years? You have gained wealth almost beyond desire; few have ever reached your position in the law so early in life, while your friends are legion. You, above all others, should be the happiest of men!"

Oh, that I dared tell her the cause and know my fate!

But, no; I would go on to the end, was my thought when she continued: "Some have honors without merit, titles which they have never earned, position which birth has thrust upon them, while you have nobly earned both honors and position, and, as I believe, you care not for titles."

"Titles!" Why should she speak so lightly of them, when so soon she would bear one? I could not resist saying: "Helen, you surprise me in thus speaking of titles, when the world has already connected your name with one which it says is soon to be yours!"

"Oh, Ruben! are you, too, one of that foolish world? I could not have believed this of you, Ruben!"

I scarce knew what I was saying in my surprise and joy, when I exclaimed: "What! are you not going to marry the earl?"

"Marry the earl! I marry the earl! Oh, 'Mister Ruben!' you never believed that story, did you?" and her merry laugh was so hearty that for the first time in years she seemed the child again. I clasped her hand—I could not help it—as I asked: "Then you are free to have me tell you why my life has been saddened?"

"Free as the child whose life you once saved."

"Then, Helen, it was because I felt that I had lost forever the only one I have ever truly loved—that child whose life I saved! May I ever protect, as my own, that life?"

"Ruben, I will be your Helen forever and ever, and will never forget you. I will love you always!"

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Gard, Anson Albert
My friend Bill.

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